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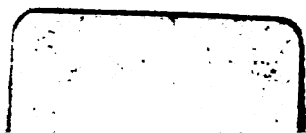
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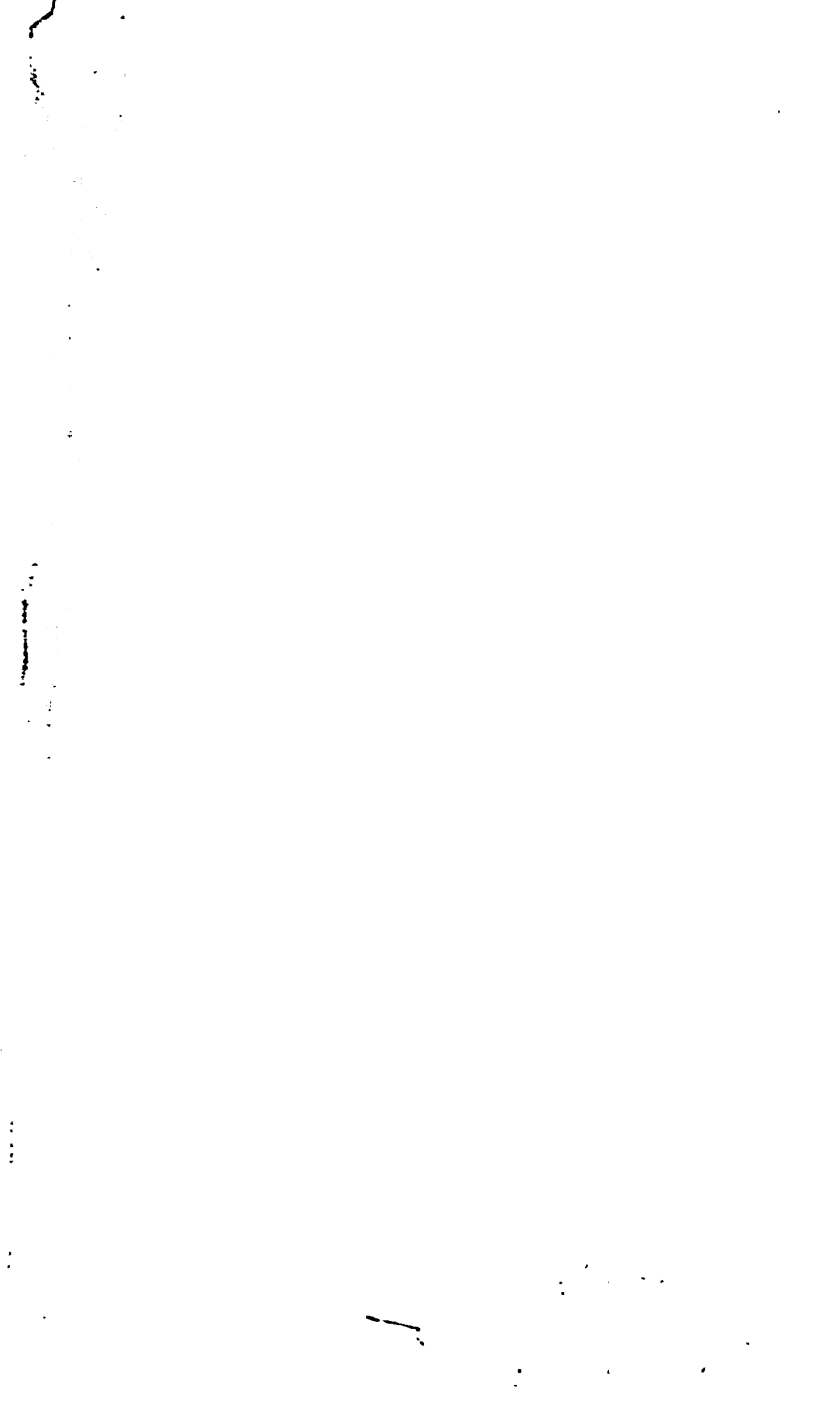
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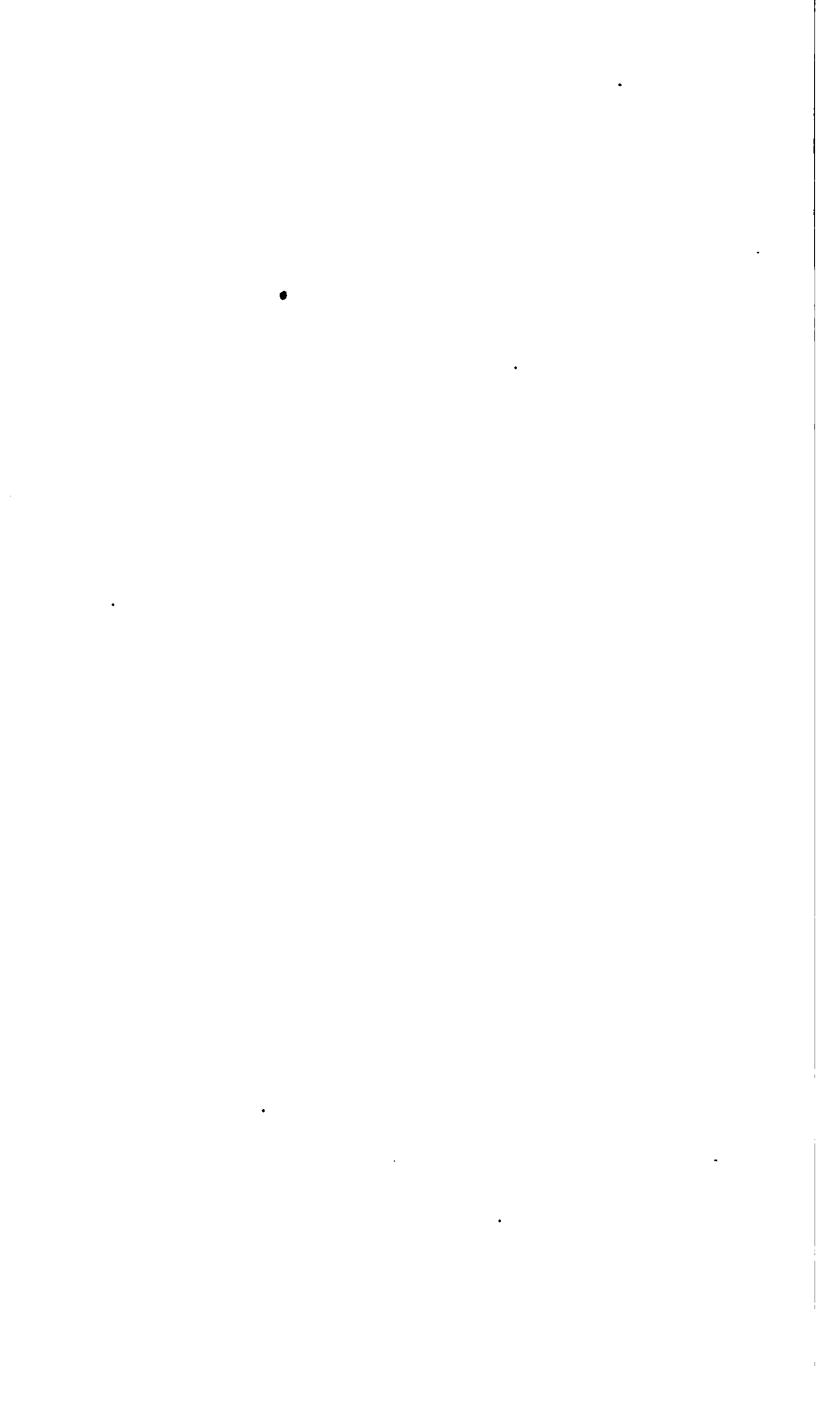
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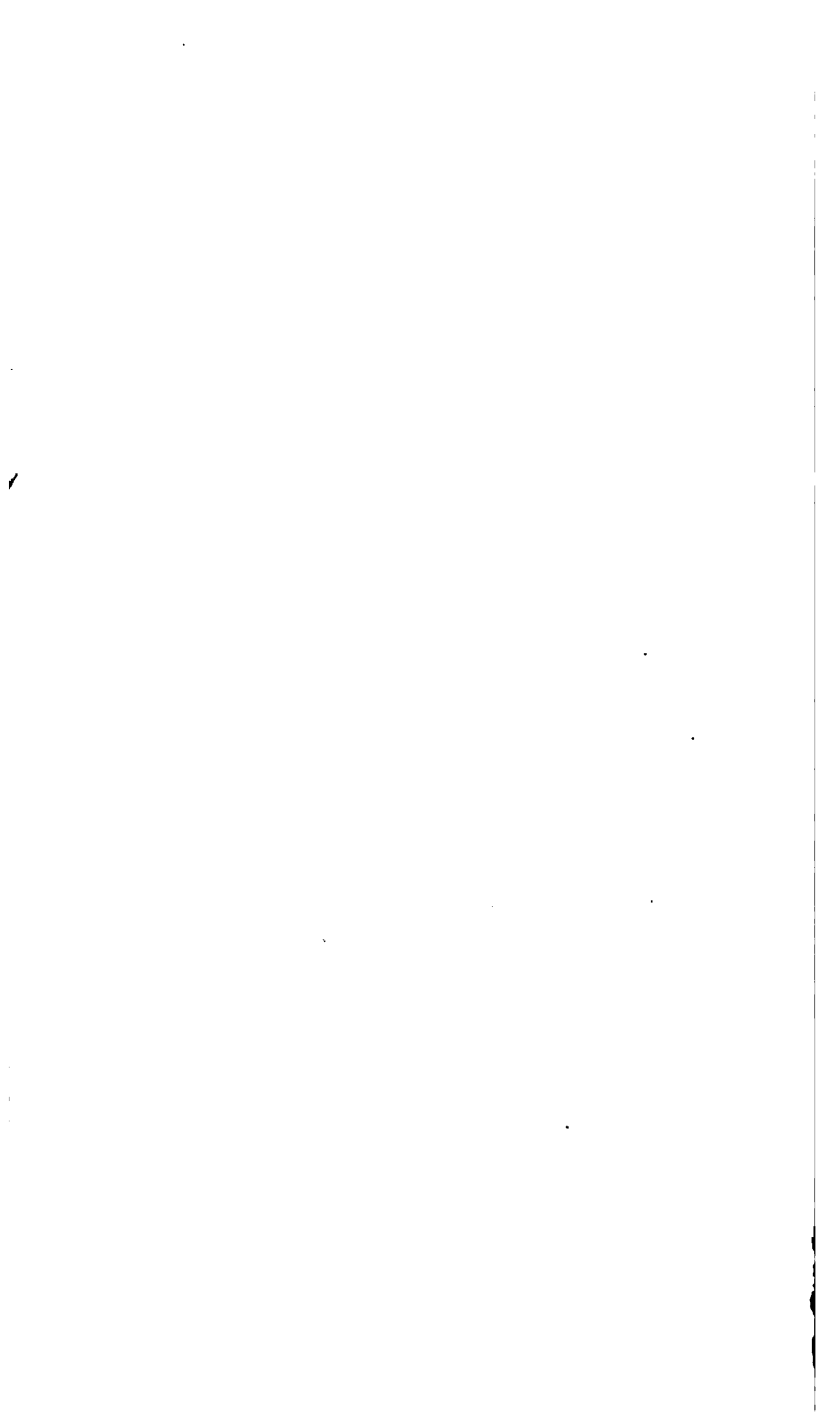
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JERNINGHAM.



JERNINGHAM:

A STORY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

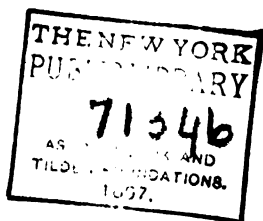
“ Pourquoi craindrais-je de dire ce que je pense ? ”
NOUVELLE HELOÏSE.—ROUSSEAU.

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B O O K I.

CHAPTER I.

It was a bright October morning, in the year 1797, when the village bells of Violetdale rang forth as merry a peal as if legions of bacchanalian spirits were chorussing in the clear autumnal air. The lark, too, poured his prodigal music between earth and sky; the tears of dew that night had shed in sorrow for human frailty were glittering and dissolving in the bright glances of the sun, and nature was radiant with that eternal freshness which alone of all things we know never seems to wane. Autumn is always the most beautiful of the seasons! The varied greenness of spring, the unmingled richness of summer, are perfect in that boundless cultivation so peculiar to "merrie Englaunde;" but autumn adds to each of these beauties a

loveliness of its own—it is softened with the mellow tints of glory in decay. Every leaf bears then a different shade; every colour that Claude beheld and blended in the azure skies of the south; every shadowed hue of red, green, and yellow with which Gaspar Poussin endued his forest recesses may *then* be seen clothing our matchless greenwoods. At the time of which we write the weather was unusually serene, and a somewhat dreary summer had suddenly changed to a series of sunny days that united the warmth of June with the variegated splendour of autumnal garniture. So the little hamlet was as merry in its sunshine as the bells discoursing in their ivied turret. The trees sighed musically; the winds whispered in melodious cadences among the sedges that fringed the stream or chased the clouds away from the broad blue firmament, and creation was all life, and life was all music; while far and near, as we have said, pealed the village chimes through the brisk October air, bearing the news on their iron tongues that a son and heir had been born to the county magnate of Violetdale, and that this was the day of the christening.

The whole town was in a lively state of excitement, for there were to be grand doings in

celebration of the event. Ale was to flow in a nut-brown flood, that would drown the spectre Care for many a day ; and oxen were to be roasted whole, so that empty stomachs might not render the rustics cynical. At mid-day the grounds were to be thrown open for a sylvan *fête*, and the village maidens, dressed in virgin white and crowned with garlands, were to dance round a famous oak in the park. It had been arranged, moreover, that the ladies who were staying at the Hall, reinforced by the fair members of the neighbouring county families, should assume a proud humility and join the peasantry in their sports. Yes, those porcelain vessels of humanity, forgetting their purple and fine linen, had consented to mingle with the potter's clay—to link themselves in the dance with hewers of wood and drawers of water. The peasant youth therefore had donned their holiday attire, with a determination to be happy for one day at least ; the village girls were blushing in their gayest ribbons, and the clear blue eye of heaven gazed down with approving beams on faces radiant with smiles and happiness.

“ A rare day for the merry-making, Master Hiccup,” said one of a group of idlers who were

congregated, open-mouthed, round the landlord of the "Crooked Billet."

"It looks fine enough *now*," replied mine host; "but fair looks are often deceitful!" And he surveyed the sky doubtingly.

Master Hiccup had a habit of imbibing his own liquors over-night, and becoming repentantly savage in the morning; a fact of which his listeners seemed well aware, for they did not give much credence to his implied scepticism.

"You are always gloomy in the morning, like a November day, Master Hiccup," said a sturdy fellow beside him; "but it won't rain for all that."

"Not a bit of it," said another; "one would think jolly old Hiccup was a raven, for he never croaks any good. He reminds you of barber Hanson's razors—always in hot water!"

A general laugh followed this rude sally, which Hiccup appeared inclined to resent.

"None of your impudence, Mister Lorrie Stocks," exclaimed the portly host, while his crimson cheek deepened to the purple colour of a mulberry; "if your hand were as ready to work as your tongue to prate, there would be

a great deal less mischief in the village." And he cast a withering look at the offender.

Lorrie was the scapegrace of the neighbourhood; so the loiterers felt that this was a home-thrust, and waited silently to see its effect.

"P'raps you're right, Hiccup," replied the imperturbable Lorrie; "appearances *are* deceitful; people *do* say that the mistress of the Crooked Billet is not such a lamb as she looks; but in course no one believes it! Now there are the fine ladies at the Hall who are coming to dance with us—"

"*Us!*" said Hiccup, contemptuously; "do you think any lady as comes from Jerningham Hall will soil her fingers by touching the like of *you?*"

"And why not?" replied Lorrie, arranging, with a rakish air, the silk pocket-handkerchief that covered his neck; "I believe I know manners as well as the best on 'em!"

"It's the only thing you *do* know, then," retorted the host; "and you hav'n't learnt *them* as you ought."

"Ought!" said Lorrie; "doesn't Parson Pringle tell us we none on us do as we ought? Look in the 'rithmetic book, Hiccup," con-

tinued the vagabond wit; "*that* will tell you ought's a cipher, and stands for nothing!"

Another round of applause followed, to the disgust of the landlord, who turned away.

"As I was saying about appearances," proceeded the loquacious scapegrace, contemplating his victim with complacent vanity; "there's the ladies at the Hall, why they'll be kissing the blessed babby that's just born, as if it were something to eat. Do you think *they* care for it? In course not. It's only that the sight of their kisses may set the mouths of the gentlemen a watering and hankering after those cherry lips, that know their duty so well. Human natur' is nothing but appearances!"

Before this piece of philosophy could be replied to, the sound of carriage-wheels attracted the general attention; and the vehicle turning an abrupt angle of the road, proved to be a travelling-chariot. A few moments brought it to the door of the Crooked Billet, from whence the reeking horses evinced a very decided disinclination to move.

The ostlers came bustling out; the countrymen winked and nudged each other, and Hiccup hastened, hat in hand, with his maligned better-half at his side, to offer his services.

The inmate, however—for there was but one—motioned them aside, and addressed his servant, who had descended from the rumble.

“ I am afraid they are done up, Shenstone,” said the stranger, glancing at the four panting steeds.

Impossible for them to go any further, my Lord,” replied the valet; “ but I dare say the landlord can produce some conveyance to take your lordship on for the last half-mile !”

“ Yes,” drawled the gentleman; “ and be driven to the Hall in a cart, like a cabbage to market ! No, damn it ! if it’s only half a mile I can walk. Open the door !”

“ Have a gig out in a minute, my Lord,” said Hiccup, making his best bow. “ Everything first-rate. Pray walk in, my Lord. Best room quite ready. Good accommodation for horse and man. Ordinary at two o’clock, and neat wines !” he added, pointing to the hostel inscriptions.

“ Shenstone,” said the gentleman, descending leisurely down the carriage-steps, and throwing away the remnant of a cigar, “ see that the horses are attended to, and then come on after me. I shall walk, if you can find any one to show the path.”

“ Will your Honour’s Lordship allow *me* to show you the way ?” said Lorrie Stocks. “ I know every inch of the ground, my Lord. I may say the trees and I have grown up together.”

The stranger nodded his assent to the proposal, and proceeded to saunter after Lorrie without vouchsafing a syllable to the officious Hiccup, or even raising his eyes to the little crowd of inquisitive townsmen.

“ Well, if I don’t have that Lorrie put in the stocks that bears his name,” said the irate host, “ why I’m a fool !”

“ You *are* a fool,” replied the inflammatory Mrs. Hiccup, “ or you’d have got the gentleman to stay lunch ; but everything’s thrown on my poor shoulders ! *I* do everything, while *you* drink away the profit !”

Shrugging the shoulders in question, which were on a tolerably broad scale, Mrs. Hiccup bounced into the little room behind the bar, and slammed the door, whereupon her spouse heaved a deep sigh, and began to unharness the horses. Meantime the stranger sauntered along the green winding lane with a languid step, and a countenance convulsed by a succession of yawns, that clearly proved his extreme

distaste for pastorals. Lorrie, however, was too much elated by the contiguity of a real lord to hide the light of his conversational powers under a bushel. He had a tale to tell in connection with everything they met, and the distance was only half a mile; so there was not much time to be lost in ceremony. With this conviction he did not stand upon the order of his speaking, but began at once—on the subject of *the weather*.

Now it is often a matter of much marvel to inquiring minds, and more particularly to foreign philosophers in green spectacles, that Englishmen invariably make the weather the alpha and omega of their discourse. Yet when we probe the apparent eccentricity, its cause is extremely simple and self-evident. In Italy, France, and Germany the climates present a graduated variation of heat and cold; not so the climate of England. The kaleidoscope itself could not present so many aspects in so brief a time. Like the “Seasons” of Mr. Thompson, bound in one small volume, we have the four seasons of the year in one short day. Can it be a wonder, then, that such constant change should be the subject of constant remark?

To return from our digression :—

“ Uncommon fine day, my Lord !” said Lorrie, touching his hat with grotesque respect.

“ Very !” replied the laconic stranger.

“ Lovely, Sir—*my Lord*, I mean—uncommon fine to be sure ; and yet the sky at sunrise was as red as a scarlet-runner, though it is so blue now !”

The stranger made a slight motion of assent, but without raising his eyes from the ground. There are some people who never dream of looking up to heaven, except to see whether it will rain or not. Lord Haverdale was one.

“ Very !” continued Lorrie, as if he had received an answer. “ Weather p’raps rather too fine ; the turnips are beginnin’ to suffer, my Lord. Turnips, like ploughmen, can’t get on without heavy-wet ! We turn round here by the white house—the Doctor’s, my Lord !”

“ It is not much bigger than a pill-box,” said his lordship, eyeing the place, with its formal railing and blue glass lamp.

“ No, Sir—my Lord, I mean—they calls the little square surgery ‘ The box of pills to be taken at bed-time ;’ and that thin bilious house is nicknamed ‘ The mixture as before !’ ”

"I suppose the neighbourhood is too healthy for a disciple of Galen to flourish in?"

"Yes, your Honour!" said Lorrie (though he didn't exactly know who Galen might be). "He has nothin' to do, so he physics the cats and dogs for practice. There was Farmer Oat's terrier as lived next door to the seminary for young ladies, and used to keep the boarders awake all night with his howling; nineteen young ladies, my Lord, very select, in white muslin and pink sashes. Well, the Doctor gave Ponto a shock with the 'lectrifier, and then put him through a course of 'bark;' so he's quiet enough now!"

"Are the people *never* ill, then?" inquired Lord Haverdale, with the faintest possible *soupeçon* of a smile.

"The paupers are, my Lord; but they gets physicked for nothing. As to the gen'l'men, there's never anything the matter with them, 'xcept when their horses throw 'em, and then they break their necks, and can't take no draughts. There's the pars'nage, my Lord!"

"To the right?"

"Yes, down in the hollow. Very snug, my Lord; like a magpie's nest. Pars'nages always *are* snug!"

“ The sinners comfort the parson, that the parson may comfort the sinners,” remarked Lord Haverdale; and at the same time he took a pinch of snuff, to comfort himself after the delivery of so long a sentence.

“ Very much so, my Lord,” replied Lorrie, who was getting quite at home with the titled scion of aristocracy; “ the young ladies, in partikler, sends him barrowfuls of kettle-holders and chair-covers worked in ’broidery !”

“ He is a bachelor I presume ?”

“ In course,” said Lorrie; “ like the ass between the two bundles of hay, he don’t know which to choose. That’s Jerningham Hall, my Lord !”

A sudden turn had brought them to the entrance of the long avenue which led to the Hall-gate; and ere Lorrie had commenced another sentence, his further colloquy was interrupted by the voice of Mr. Jerningham himself, who recognized and warmly welcomed Lord Haverdale. The latter gave Lorrie some silver, told him to call next morning and ask for him; and then, taking Jerningham’s arm, the two gentlemen ascended the terrace.

There was a vivid contrast, both in manner and person, between the new arrival and his

host, the owner of that fair domain. Mr. Jer-ningham's exterior partook more of the country gentleman's. His complexion was florid, his form robust, without being plethoric; and his address, though perfectly *comme il faut*, lacked that indescribable polish which characterized Lord Haverdale. He was really taller than his guest, yet he did not appear so tall; he looked the younger of the two, though he was the senior by several years. Lord Haverdale's figure was slim, but symmetrical; and had evidently possessed the original germ of great activity. The deep languor that pervaded its every motion wore something of an affected air, until you looked in his face, and then those colourless but chiselled features explained the apathy which marked alike his manner and frame. You saw that he had lived too fast; that the machine was corroded by the headlong speed with which its master-spirit had impelled it. The soul still burnt brightly; but its tenement was consuming.

There was, however, no coldness in the stately Peer while he received the welcome of Mr. Jerningham and tendered him his congratulations on the event they had met to celebrate.

For some minutes they paced together along the terrace, conversing gaily on the present and the future; and there often flashed forth some laughing reminiscence of college-pleasantry that recalled the past.

"And now," said Mr. Jerningham at last—"now that I have caught you, how long may I hope for your goodly company?"

"Ten days hence must see me in town, I regret to say," replied the guest.

"Ten days!" exclaimed his hospitable host, "and we have so much to talk of; it reminds one of the guide-books that instruct strangers how to see London in a week. *N'importe*—we must make the best use of our time, and teach you to drink deep ere you depart!"

"Our motto on most occasions has been '*Nunc est bibendum*,'" said Haverdale; "I believe we have caroused together in all the four quarters of the globe!"

"Very true," answered Jerningham, sighing slightly at the recollection; "but now my bachelor days are over, Haverdale. You must take pity on me occasionally. Mind, you owe me a month in the winter!"

"Rest assured, my dear fellow, your only difficulty will be to unhouse me," said Haver-

dale, with more feeling in his tone than he had hitherto displayed ; “ really you are very much to be envied—the finest place in the county ; the fairest wife, and troops of friends ! You had no need to be plaintive before ; but now you have a son to keep you alive with his debts and devilry, depend upon it you will be perfectly secure from *ennui* ! ”

“ Yes,” replied Jerningham, musingly, “ I centre all in my son. Our first toast shall be, ‘ May he live to revel in Jerningham Hall ! ’ ”

As he concluded speaking, the two gentlemen stopped, with a simultaneous impulse, to gaze upon the wide lands and massive pile before them. And if other climes through which they had wandered might have repaid their gaze with greater sublimity, they could have offered nothing to their memory that was more beautiful in its peculiar kind.

Embowered on the outskirts of a wood, which sheltered it from the natural bleakness of its position—for it was on the sea-coast—the habitation of Mr. Jerningham was at once (a rare union) comfortable and picturesque. Its moss-grown turrets, its aged trees, the grandeur of the surrounding scenery, with all

its ruggedness softened down but not destroyed by the careful hand of art; the massive stateliness of the Hall itself, so capacious in size that a monarch might have dwelt there, with his retainers, at ease—all combined to make it the object of general admiration—all spoke of the luxury and wealth of the owner. The building was Gothic in style, untainted by that modern innovation in which retired citizens display at once their folly and *bourgeois* taste. Its architecture was unrivalled in this respect; and the same purity extended to its utmost details. The widely-spread lawn, in front, sloped down towards a murmuring rivulet, whose tiny waves, clear as crystal, rippled over a waterfall, making music among the stones, until they foamed into their natural channel and gradually became calm. On those banks the deer wantoned, and stooped to drink, or stood gazing in wonderment at their own graceful forms as they were mirrored in the stream. Herons, wild-ducks, and numerous aquatic birds of inland breed, sported among the water-lilies that reared their heads above the surface, or floated lazily down the tide; and over the old tenement screamed and chattered a colony

of crows and rooks in their strange language, ever restless, ever sailing from the trees to the water—from the water to the trees.

That fair retreat had not the pensive beauty of a Neapolitan villa, nor the romantic grandeur of a château overlooking the Rhine; but it possessed *one* charm which neither of these could rival—it had the air of an English *home*. On the continent comfort and home are unknown; the rage for splendour has dispersed the Lares from every hearth—for household gods, like the fairy race, wither under neglect.

Such was the sentiment of Lord Haverdale, whose late return from foreign travel brought the contrast more vividly to his mind; and he was about to speak, when their attention was called away to more immediate objects. The carriages which were to form the *cortége* had begun to assemble, and the impatient steeds were snorting and pawing the ground, until the court-yard rang with excitement. Recalled to themselves by the universal bustle, the two gentlemen laughed at their momentary abstraction, and, stepping through the terrace window, were soon in presence of the company who had assembled on this auspicious day.

Among many welcomes and introductions

- Lord Haverdale made his way to the *fautouil*, where Mrs. Jerningham lounged in splendid *deshabille*, and was quickly engaged in paying her every imaginable compliment that such an occasion could elicit. Meantime, there was a busy hum of conversation amid the guests. A christening, like a marriage, is peculiarly suggestive of matrimonial ideas; and there are some unimaginative men, who are quite ready to marry, only they never think of it. There was a good deal of flattery sparkling on the lips of the gentlemen, which the ladies verbally rebutted, but perhaps believed notwithstanding; and their ostrich-feathers danced, and their laughter rang forth in tuneful notes. What music like it? Many taper hands were furtively squeezed by bachelors, who had hitherto been philosophically indifferent to female charms, charmed they never so wisely. Feminine handkerchiefs were dropped—perhaps by accident—and gallantly picked up by the attendant cavaliers. But at last a servant announced that the carriages waited; whereupon the gentlemen handed the ladies in, and, led by the family coach, containing Lord Haverdale, Mrs. Jerningham, Lady Melton, the nurse, and the young heir, the whole cavalcade

wound, in stately pride, through the grounds towards the village church.

It was a rare old pile, that hamlet kirk ; and one well adapted to inspire solemn musing. No cunning artificers had lavished costliness upon its echoing aisles ; no painter had been permitted to mock its walls with tinsel ; no miner had disembowelled mother earth for gold to adorn the simple chastity of its marble altar. But religion dwelt there—the religion of the soul, that needs not wax-candles and illuminated missals to fix its wavering faith. The temple was old beyond the knowledge of age ; its niches were filled with scrolls and tablets—some of them quaint, many of them poor in aspect, but all suitable to bear the facts they recorded. There was no attempt to disguise the solemn attributes of death under a gay exterior, or rob the grim spectre of his fatal sting. Calm and sepulchral were the tombs—calm as their shrouded dwellers—grave as the warning they seemed to whisper to mankind. Like the unimpassioned front of the Egyptian Sphinx, they were big with meaning, and eloquent in their silence ! But if age reigned austere within, youth smiled beautifully without. Over the windows and the

walls, over the tower and the turret, wherever it could cling or twine, the ivy had wreathed itself like a garment. Freshly as sunlight it crept through crevice and nook of the crumbling masonry, and the peal of bells was muffled by its luxuriance; and as the owl complained nightly, from his nest amid its branches, his hootings sounded faintly, like the fitful echo of a spirit-hymn. So grey and solemn within—so green and beautiful without, it was a rare old pile, that village temple!

And now, sweeping down its silent aisles, past the square carpeted pews of the wealthy on the one hand, and the wooden benches of humbler votaries on the other, came the fashionable crowd from Jerningham Hall. Rustling with silks, murmuring with gaiety, full of life and hope, and the thoughts that are of this world, they stood at the baptismal font, with the priest before and the dead around.

The words were spoken, the water was sprinkled, and Lord Haverdale became a sponsor that Edward Jerningham should be reared in the faith of his ancestors. Brightly on the font and on the priest, on the beauty of the mother and on the infant countenance of the young heir, fell the sunlight as those sen-

tences were uttered. Nature and man smiled alike, in happy omen of his future success !

After registering the ceremony, and handsomely feeing the officials, the visitors re-entered their carriages, accompanied by the clergyman, who had been persuaded to partake Mr. Jerningham's hospitality. The curious crowd of spectators rolled away, the portals were closed, and, with the exception of some children and old men who loitered among the flower-grown tombs of the church-yard, the greenwood temple was soon deserted for the scene of joyous merriment, which was to mark that day in white.

CHAPTER II.

THE VILLAGE FESTIVAL.

LEAVING the guests at the Hall to discuss the luxurious *déjeuner* that waited their return, we now pass forward to the village festival. On the banks of the rivulet which we have described as running through the grounds of Jerningham, a motley group was collected, resembling in its extravagant variety the blithest characteristics of a country fair. Itinerant tradesmen were displaying their wares in temporary tents erected for the occasion; while others perambulated through the crowd, calling lustily for customers. The children were disporting in swings; the men were purchasing ribbons from the booths, and trinkets from the pedlars, for the brown but merry partners that hung upon their arms, and beguiled their hearts and money away. There were jugglers, whose tricks convinced the old women that magic was not a fable, and that men still sold

themselves to the Evil One ; and in the midst of all, forming the grand attraction, was a party of tumblers clothed in flesh-coloured tights, who twisted their bodies into Gordian knots, that made their extrication a marvel to rural minds. Among the crowd might be seen the dark visages of the gipsies, betraying in their stealthy features many a tale of linen ravished from hedges, and poultry unlawfully abstracted. On this occasion, however, honesty had been voted the best policy ; so their ingenuity was confined to the pillage of fortune-telling. With the keen knowledge of human nature that marks their race, they unerringly selected their victims, and the palms were crossed with silver, and success was promised in exact proportion to the amount. Gladly rose the laugh and the hum of busy voices, with the bang of crackers, and a *mélange* of musical instruments all playing different tunes ; and with flaunting pride the streamers and flags floated from the booths, and the girls danced, and the tumblers evolved, and the jugglers tricked with supernatural skill that excited bewildering surprise.

“Buy ! buy ! buy !” cried a man whose stall displayed a variety of household implements,

which, to save confusion, were all the same price—"buy, ladies?—all the blessings of life, and all at the same figure—one shilling—needles, pins, cotton, calico, boot-jacks, and bottle-jacks. Try a bottle-jack, mam?—wonderful! cooks the meat by instinct; and when there's no meat, it does to rock the cradle. Going to marry, sir?" continued the fellow to a countryman beside whom a young girl was sidling. "Let me furnish you—everything here, from door-mats to dishes. Capital dishes these for soup—deep, sir—like you, eh? Look at the plates, sir—fit for the Hall—cost nothing—dine off *plate* every day—ah, ah! Nutmeg-graters, colanders, pots and kettles! Try my kettles—never were such kettles to sing—beat the hopera people hollow, and go it for nothing, like nightingales!"

Want of breath stopped the voluble merchant; and a showman, putting his head outside a tent, took advantage of the occasion to attract attention towards himself.

"Walk in, ladies and gentlemen!" vociferated the proprietor; "walk in, and see the boa-constrictor from Asia, coiled up in a bonnet-box; he's just a-going to eat his lunch—three rabbits, a kitten or two, and a pint of

beer, with the chill off! Only one halfpenny! Walk in, and I shall show you a show that will show you no other show is worth showing! This is *the* show!"

And, as an audience had now entered the tent, the folds were closed from inquisitive eyes; and the proprietor and his satellites retired.

While the merchant-pedlars pursued their customers with drollery and persuasion, and the whole riot of the scene was at its height, Mr. Jerningham and his guests, having done justice to the *dejeuner* before mentioned, had now begun to mingle with the assembled peasantry. It had been arranged, with graceful consideration, that they should appear among them by degrees, and not in a party, so that the restraint consequent on a formal entry might be avoided. The ladies, therefore, were now sauntering about the grounds, and amusing themselves with the rustic sports; while the gentlemen got up scrambles for cakes among the children, or brought blushes to the maiden cheeks of the village girls, by paying them compliments they had never heard before.

"There's a pretty girl!" said Lord Haver-

dale to Mr. Jerningham, with whom he was lounging leisurely. "Those eyes are as dark as night—a gipsy, by Jove!"

"I am sorry to see her," replied the host; "the gipsies always bring misfortune to the neighbourhood. A man was murdered the last time they came; and, though it was never proved, there was little doubt they had a hand in it."

"This one seems harmless enough, Jerningham—beyond the murders that her eyes have to answer for," said Lord Haverdale; and at the moment, his friend was called away—he stood alone.

"Where have you sprung from, my prettiest maiden?" he continued. The girl beckoned him aside, with a flash from her burning eye; and he followed a few paces outside the throng.

"Will you cross the gipsy's hand with gold, that she may read your destiny?" whispered the dark enchantress.

"Not to read my destiny, but to adorn your ringlets," he replied, putting a guinea in her hand.

"And yet the palm of the hand is as a book, where the past and the future are inscribed,"

said the girl, placing her hand on his ; "let me read yours." He extended it, with an incredulous smile.

"Here is no conflict in the lines," she added, gazing thoughtfully on the hand, whose aristocratic smallness equalled the feminine beauty of her own ; "all is smooth and uninvolved. Your career will be as free from extraordinary sorrow as from unusual triumph. Beyond the annoyances which are our common lot, you will be exempt."

"May it be so !" he replied, gazing on her dark beauty with an admiration he could not conceal ; while the woman's consciousness of her power lit up her eyes with double lustre in a moment.

"Surely you must be the queen-bee of the hive," he continued, retaining her hand ; "there can be no face more rare than this among the gipsy clan."

"I am the *Queen* !" she answered proudly. And, at the instant, her scarlet hood fell back, revealing a head and neck of faultless symmetry. Her dark hair fell in rich masses around a small oval face, which the sun had lighted, but failed to burn. The features were regular, and femininely soft : the eye was

shaded, while in repose, by long, dark lashes. Its natural expression was evidently one of extreme simplicity. But now, in the pride of her last avowal, she wore a demeanour of innate dignity that marked the truth of the words which she repeated—"I am the Queen!"

"And justly so," said Haverdale, "if the brightest rule. But tell me, my Queen, have you a mate to share your power, or what is more invaluable—your heart?"

"I have not yet chosen," she answered, smiling archly.

"Then I rob no one else but you," said Lord Haverdale, snatching a kiss; but as she disengaged herself from his embrace, a ragged head was thrust between them. It was a male member of the tribe, who had been telling fortunes among the rest. Hastily slipping another guinea in her hand, he sauntered away, followed by a glance of angry hate from the man who had disturbed the colloquy.

In gliding measures danced the rural music; and though more classic piping may have floated down Thessalian valleys in the olden time, there was never more merriment in feathered feet than in those which now twinkled upon the velvet sward that bordered the rivu-

let. Like tipsy bacchanals, the young and old, the rich and poor, fleeted time carelessly in their fantastic dance of pleasure. Some of the most adventurous of the swains had even summoned courage to doff their hats, scrape their bows, and demand the grand ladies in partnership. And the grand ladies, with affable magnanimity, had placed their lily hands upon peasant velveteen, and consented to be led away, the sensation on their side being one of intense amusement at the novelty of the situation, while the adventurous hero felt about as comfortable at what he had done as if he had raised some fiend whom it was impossible to exorcise.

In the hottest of the fray, and with the fairest lady from the Hall, Lorrie was displaying his matchless agility, and conversing with such an air of perfect *insouciance* as utterly astounded that lady's mind. For once, aristocratic *hauteur* was at a nonplus—there was no resisting the inimitable but respectful drollery that characterized Mister Lorrie Stocks; and his partner had not only condescended to show her teeth several times, which in fashionable society is synonymous with smiling, but had absolutely

been driven to laugh outright at more than one of his eccentric sallies. Hiccup, too—the melancholy owner of the scolding wife and The Crooked Billet—had given his spouse the slip. Leaving that acidulated drop of womanhood to languish behind the tap, he had strolled thither to vent his gall in the satire of a cynical Diogenes. But the scene was too much for him. Whether it recalled visions of unfettered bachelorhood, or whether the infection of good-humour had impregnated the air, we cannot tell; but certain it is that misanthropic Hiccup was gyrating with the rest, looking very much like an ox that had dropt in upon a pic-nic party.

Want of breath, however, more than inclination, stopped the dancers at last; and couple after couple retreated from the ranks to the benches beside the stream. Then the pedlars came out again in full force. Never were so many ribbons bought and presented to the village maidens, in exchange for furtive kisses, as were bought and sold that day. Never had tumblers displayed their flesh-coloured tights to such advantage; and as to the boa constrictor, he had been taken out of his flannel

so often, that at last he went to sleep in despair, and made his final appearance in a state of somnambulism.

At length morning wore away, and the early freshness of the atmosphere subsided into a calm, monotonous stillness. The arid atmosphere and brooding silence of a desert seemed to have crept around. The leaves no longer rustled, the branches no longer sighed as they bent gracefully to the breeze; but over the sky a heavy mist had stolen, like the dull film that gathers over the eye of a dying man. Hiccup looked up, with a shake of the head, and got laughed at for his trouble.

The hour for the banquet had now arrived, and long tables and benches were spread along the turf, covered with sirloins of beef, that seemed impregnable in their solid grandeur. Up, up in their goblets danced the ale, with the lustre of a sun in its depths, and flakes of foam clustered like beads upon its surface—such beads as (if historians lie not) our monkish ancestors loved to count devotionally. At the head of the board, surrounded by his tenantry, sat Mr. Jerningham, welcoming all, and making them merry by the joviality of his face and manner. He had a word for every one—

toasts for the men, which they drank with thirsty applause ; and jokes for the girls, which made them laugh until the beef went down the wrong way, rendering much exertion necessary to recover them. With the happiest ease he overcame any restraint that gleamed forth, and strove to drown every recollection except that of boon companionship. Taking the opportunities as they presented themselves, he noticed each individually, and talked of his cattle and crops ; and more than one who was in arrear with his payments received the welcome intelligence that "that matter of the three quarters' rent" had been wiped away from the landlord's memory. By degrees, the merriment rose to enthusiasm. Full of ale and philanthropy—and it is marvellous how good-natured an Englishman is *after dinner*—Mr. Lorrie Stocks rose up and proposed the health of Mr. Jerningham in a neat speech, which was quite oriental in its imagery.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I rise with the greatest pleasure" ("the greatest difficulty" would have been nearer the mark, for the ale was potent), "to propose the health of Mister Jerningham, and the blessed babby, Mr. Eddard" (loud cheers from everybody,

except the person who had been deputed to make the speech, and had got it, neatly written, in his pocket). "Mr. Jerningham's generosity is known throughout the county" (continued applause, during which an enlightened peasant or two disappeared under the table). "He don't give us a blow-out of tracts when we're hungry, like the ladies in green spectacles at Sion Chapel; nor he don't want us to tipple water as if we were gudgeons, after sweating all day in the fields; but he gives us," continued Lorrie, with a slight poetic licence—"he gives us the beef and ale as made England glorious" (loud cheers)—"as made us thrash our enemies as easily as our wheat—as made the girls so plaguy handsome, and the men stronger than Goliath the giant" (great applause). "Gentlemen, I put sirloins and treble X against tracts and water, and propose the health of Muster Jerningham, and Muster Eddard, the blessed babby."

Amid shouts of uproarious approval, the beakers were replenished; and those who could manage to attain a perpendicular stood up with one accord, and drank the double toast proposed by Lorrie. After the cheering had somewhat subsided, Mr. Jerningham rose. Filling

himself a flagon of the ale which had been so eloquently apostrophized, he commenced his speech by a compliment on the eccentric scapegrace who had just spoken. In glowing terms of gratitude he then alluded to the exhibition of attachment they had evinced, to his own intentions on their behalf, to the long connexion that had existed between his ancestors and theirs; and when he concluded by a wish that his son might live to be the heir, not only of *his* estates, but of *their* good-will, a roar of applause followed, that made the welkin ring again.

He had scarcely finished speaking, ere a long, low rumbling boomed along the sky. It increased in a gathering wave of sound, and, after the progress of a few seconds, burst in a loud clap of thunder over the very turrets of Jerningham Hall. The wind sighed heavily through trees and avenues, with that peculiar wail that heralds the rise of the storm-fiend from his lair, as if Nature mourned the approaching conflict that was about to disturb her repose. While the startled revellers gazed breathlessly upon each other, a sheet of lurid flame lit up the heavens, the greensward, the grey towers, the gliding streamlet; and their

upturned faces were suffused with a ghoul-like purple pallor; and then, in large, scattered splashes, came the angry rain. So intent had every one been in the pursuit of pleasure, that the signs of the changing weather had been unnoticed; and their consternation was now proportionate to their surprise. Some fled hastily homeward; others accepted the shelter of the Hall, which Mr. Jerningham hospitably offered. In a few moments, the storm reigned and revelled alone throughout those wide domains which had been so full of life an hour before.

Thus ended the day of rejoicing in commemoration of the birth and christening of Edward Jerningham. Could the light of its morning and the darkness of its eve be an omen of the sunshine and shadow which were to vary his fate?

CHAPTER III.

THE GUESTS.

SINCE the events recorded in our preceding chapters, several days had passed away, during which time the whirl of festivity at Jerningham Hall was undimmed with a single shadow. Morning brought the horses to the door ; and their appearance usually heralded some new excursion to the beautiful spots with which the neighbourhood abounded. Occasionally they were dismissed, and fishing or shooting parties ruled the day ; while the dance, the song, and last, not least, the merry flirtation behind the ambush of a pillar or painted screen, formed the lights of amusement that ruled the night. Lord Haverdale, who had resisted all persuasions that tended to prolong his stay, suddenly changed his mind, and consented to remain another week. Mr. Jerningham was in high spirits at ensuring his friend's society for a further space ; Mrs. Jerningham was already

recovering the transparent hue of health that characterized her queen-like beauty; and the young heir was robust to a marvel. There could scarcely have been a merrier party, therefore, than that now collected at the Hall. Though the number was small, its units were of congenial temperament.

It was evening. The dinner-bell had rung forth its sonorous summons for the second time; and, amid that peculiar rustling of dresses which follows the general pause in conversation, the guests paired off from the drawing-room to the *salle-à-manger*. This apartment, like the rest of the mansion (which we shall have occasion hereafter to describe more at length), was fitted up in the richest manner of the old style. The walls were of polished oaken wainscoting; the ceiling and mantel-piece were richly graven, and carved into quaint devices and mythological figures. Beside the three deep-set windows hung crimson draperies, beautifully relieved with golden fringe, the massive splendour of which, while it detracted perhaps from the cheerfulness of the room by day, materially added to its grandeur by the light of the candelabras. No blaze of lustre, however, was

permitted to destroy the general harmony that reigned around—a very common fault at great dinner-tables. One magnificent chandelier, depending from the ceiling over the centre of the table, shed a mellow light over all; and smaller lamps were so arranged along the walls that their rays were softly reflected from a profusion of the choicest pictures. Nothing is so conducive to festivity as gentle light: the ancient epicures softened their lamps almost to dimness on the occasion of any celebrated banquet. The arrangements in every other respect were perfect; the party were in more than usual hilarity; and Mr. Jerningham himself was chuckling joyously at a new acquisition he had made in the shape of a French cook.

“Now, Haverdale,” said the host, “I shall expect you this evening to eat all down *your* side, and up the other. Know that I have a new cook to-night, and no less a one than Vatel Martin.”

“Scelerat!” exclaimed Haverdale, “how did you seduce him from the ——— Club?”

“By the offer of an extra five hundred a-year, and the suggestion of a new sauce: he took the hint, made a complete success, and

that settled the matter. 'The money,' he said, 'flattered his understanding; but the gift of the invention *touched his heart!*' "

"So the ingrate namesake of Louis Quatorze's *cuisinier* has deserted town," said Haverdale, with a sigh. "Ah, he lacks the loyal spirit of the great Vatel, who fell on his sword because there was no salt-water fish for the monarch's table."

"Forgive his defection," replied Mr. Jer-ningham, "and let me assist you to his most famous dish—the preparation of cods' sounds. It is finished to a thought."

The dish was passed round, and pronounced to be a *chef d'œuvre* of culinary triumph.

"Superb!" exclaimed Mr. Greville. "Who would think a cod was capable of such flavour?" Mr. Greville was the editor of a celebrated paper, and one of the first conversationists of the day. Peace to his ashes! he is now no more.

"A cod ought to be *all* 'sound,'" said Haverdale.

"Yes," replied Greville—"as the old motto says, '*vox, et præterea nihil*'—'sound,' and nothing else."

"Allow me to send you some oysters, Mr.

Greville," said Mrs. Jerningham, while the last sally was greeted with due applause. "Do you like oysters?"

"I should like to sleep in an oyster-bed every night," answered Greville; "they are my peculiar weakness. Let me preface my attack by taking wine with you, Mrs. Jerningham."

The hostess bowed a gracious assent to her favoured guest, whose ready wit and knowledge of men and books made him the life of the whole party. During the bang of the champagne-corks and the advance of the next course, the substantiality of which always makes conversation interjectional, we will endeavour to initiate the reader into the characters of the assembled revellers.

There was the Lady Melton, of equestrian notoriety, who divided her time impartially between riding and flirting. Her ladyship was a married lady of thirty-three, with rather a high colour, regular aquiline features, and a figure of amazonian symmetry. She was a very fast talker; and a certain drollery pervading her conversation, united with high animal spirits, was often mistaken for wit, and formed, indeed, a very fair substitute for the

more intellectual scintillations of gaiety. She liked young men (platonically, of course) for companions, and was never so delighted as when she could find a difficult fence or hedge which "the young fellows" fought shy of. To compass such a dilemma, she would go a mile out of her way; and woe to the nervous cavalier who did not follow her ladyship in the headlong leap. She roasted him without mercy for ever after. Besides these accomplishments, she could write *bouts rimes*, manufacture charades, play the harp like St. Cecilia, and sing everything, buffo and seria, that had ever been sung. She was an excellent comic actress, she could fence with considerable skill, and was universally voted, in fact, to be a second "admirable Crichton,"* in petticoats, instead of inexpressibles. The reader, we think, will agree, as Mr. Jerningham had done, that such a comet was no small acquisition to a country-seat.

Then there were the two Miss Gordons, of whom the younger, Christina, was plump, fair,

* This may seem an exaggeration to the uninitiated: it is not so, but the literal sketch of a character well known in sporting circles. Alas that such a sun should have been marred with a single spot! Of that anon.

good-natured, and silly; and the elder, Aspasia—but we must draw *her* at full length, for neither her mind nor form was of ordinary moulding. In person she was below the middle height, and thin even to that attenuation which bespeaks disease. Her clothes never seemed made for her, so ungraceful were the folds in which they fell; her feet were clumsy; her head was much too large for the body; yet, with all these disadvantages, she commanded universal attention by the character of her face. Thick clusters of chestnut curls hung round a countenance to which no exercise or excitement could bring a moment's colour: her complexion was spotless as marble. She could not boast even regularity of feature: the nose was as much too small as the mouth was too large; the brows had a lowering aspect, and were too wide apart. But a glance at her eyes riveted the beholder at once, and redeemed his first opinion that she was common-place. The long lashes which fringed those orbs failed to quench their light even when the spirit reposed: when it was roused, and anger or intellect shot forth, they literally seemed to set the whole countenance on fire. Sensitive in mind, passionate in temper, unat-

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tractive in person, stored with knowledge, yet ever thirsting for more, there could not have been a stranger contrast than existed between her sister and herself. A comparison between the two always ended in favour of the younger: in spite of Aspasia's talents, most people feared and disliked her.

Last, but not least, came the bewitching Madame de Meranie, a French woman of the best school. Her stature was of that attractive degree just exceeding the middle height, which mingles the dignity of a tall figure with the seductive grace belonging to the more "*mignonnette*" style of female beauty. Her complexion was bright beyond what is usual among our Gallic neighbours, and stood the test of comparison even beside Saxon fairness, while the laughing animation of expressive hazel eyes continually rioted over her regular features and clear open brow. To these personal recommendations she added a mind at once winningly feminine and carelessly *spirituel*. Conversation seemed an enjoyment to her, like song to the bird, and she rose easily in pursuit of the subject from humour to brilliancy without study or effort. Lady Melton often monopolized the

men during the day, but night always brought a crowd of worshippers to the feet of Madame de Meranie—the drawing-room was her throne. Such was the woman who had been sacrificed in a “*mariage de convenance*” to a man whom she regarded with indifference that precluded alike love and hate. Whatever powers of attachment might lurk in her heart, there was little trace of their existence in her manner. All was hidden beneath the smooth and smiling calm with which polished society teaches its votaries to veil emotions that must remain untold. For the rest, their history was one but too common at that time. They were refugees from the anarchy of their distracted country—the Reign of Terror, that scattered the French aristocracy into every corner of Europe, had driven them to England.

The men may be described within a much smaller space than gallantry has compelled us to accord to the ladies. Mr. Jerningham was good-natured, open-hearted, and lavish to a fault; the liveliest of companions, the most satisfactory of hosts. Lord Haverdale was courtly and cold, forming a vivid contrast to Mr. Greville, whose manner was almost *brusque*

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with excess of animal spirits and mental activity. Besides these, there were two or three other country gentlemen of the usual calibre staying at the house. Like all such men, their conversation was interjectional, and when their favourite horses formed the theme, it became somewhat intersprinkled with slang; but as they drank deeply, and went to sleep very soon after dinner, they were useful butts for the witty shafts of Lord Haverdale and Mr. Greville.

"How do you like the new preparation of turtle?" said Aspasia Gordon to Lord Haverdale, whom she was vainly endeavouring to warm into a flirtation.

"Pretty well, Miss Gordon," replied the peer; "there is a kind of barbaric *grauder* about it; but it reminds one so of the plebeian dirt of the city that I seldom eat it, on principle."

"You are quite right," echoed the young lady, with a look of extreme candour. She would have agreed with equal warmth had the opinion been exactly the reverse. "It is vulgar—I think I will try your dish; *apropos* of the city, did you ever see the Lord Mayor's Show?"

" I never was in the city but once, and then I was nearly killed," replied Haverdale, dropping his knife at the recollection.

" Indeed !" exclaimed the lady, with well-assumed horror.

" True, I assure you. I had to see a city lawyer about some poaching fellow, who had been shot—accidentally of course—on my preserves at Haverdale; before I could reach the cabriolet, a mad bull chased me down the street."

" And what was the end of the adventure?"

" Oh! as bad as the beginning. I rushed into the first open door for protection; it turned out to be an eating-house, and the waiter absolutely commenced his bill of fare with ' Roast-beef, sir! ' "

" Did your Lordship venture on the city delicacies?"

" No, the bull had cured all desire for roast-beef."

" You had naturally been *cowed* enough," interposed Greville. " The adventure reminds me of one equally agreeable that I met with in Ireland on a fishing excursion. I had wandered away from my party, and found myself at night up to the neck in a bog, supping off

the stagnant green at the top, and the leeches supping off my legs at the bottom. At last, however, a labourer fished me out, took me to his cabin, and I fell asleep on the straw bed of his only room, in company with two pigs, and a stray donkey that was waiting to be owned. Horrid dreams seized me that night! First I thought I was in Noah's Ark, with all the animals let loose; then I fancied some demon had dropped me on the very top of the North Pole, and left me to shiver to death. Lastly, I dreamed I was drowning, and woke to find it was very nearly true."

"How was that?" asked Mr. Jerningham.

"Simply this," said Greville: "the rain was falling through the roof in bucketsfull, and all the rest of the night I was compelled to lie in bed with an umbrella up."

A general smile followed this unromantic *denouement* to a tale, which, like all Greville's stories, drew half its *point* from the manner of the narrator. One of the country gentlemen then told an anecdote about a horse, which might have been a very good joke considering that it came from a country gentleman, only it was nipped in the bud by Mr. Jerningham asking him to take wine. The wary host was

far too wise to let the bores of his society interfere with the lions.

The champagne now began to loosen tongues that had hitherto been monosyllabic in their remarks—true *bons vivants*—"who greatly daring dine" never talk much in the early stages. Lady Melton rattled on with "the young fellows," asking questions and answering them herself; while Madame de Meranie was unobtrusively winning the men as usual by her polished grace and pretty broken English. So the conversation floated round, touching lightly on many subjects, and, bee-like, extracting the honey of amusement from all.

It would be a curious spectacle if, at a party like the present, some silent observer could, Asmodeus-like, penetrate into the secret hearts of those around him. Strange revelations would then be made, strange contrasts between the solemnity of the hidden thoughts and the levity of the conversation that concealed them. Thanks to a wiser dispensation, man is inscrutable to his fellow-creatures. Sorrow is invisible while it writhes beneath a smile: guilt is unknown until it is acted, and justly so; for if every lawless hope and sordid passion that sways a human heart in turn were laid bare,

there could be little brotherhood felt among mankind. Happily our only qualification for reading others is the study of ourselves, and thus when knowledge is acquired it is mingled with humility.

Before we are capable of judging the faults of our brethren, we must have become painfully aware of our own.

While the jest and the laugh therefore echoed in well-bred tones around Mr. Jerningham's board, nearly every bosom there was brooding over schemes that the future was expected to complete: merriment was not the *only* tenant of those flashing minds. Perhaps Lord Haverdale was the most *distract*. When the last course of the two hours' dinner had passed, and the claret was circulating amid a sustained and rapid fire of conversation, he pushed his chair somewhat behind the line, and under cover of the country gentleman next him, spoke little beyond the assentation that politeness required. His restless eye, however, betokened activity of thought, and in its least guarded moments seemed to wander towards the host as if *he* were a subject on which he dwelt. Then again his features relaxed, he emptied the flower-wreathed glass before him, and softer

thoughts of a sunny female countenance usurped his brow. But it was no face around him whose image drove away sterner thoughts—though Lady Melton was smiling on him like a mid-day sun, and Madame de Meranie shot mellowed lustre from her languid eyes—it was from the far greenwood that he conjured up a countenance dark and beautiful as night in its Egyptian origin. The visage of the gipsy queen was haunting him. Could the ladies have read his thoughts, they would have had less difficulty in accounting for the regularity of his diurnal disappearance immediately after breakfast, at which time he invariably galloped forth alone, leaving the ladies generally in astonishment, and Miss Aspasia Gordon particularly in despair at his desertion. Suddenly, however, the former listlessness of his manner changed—a remark from Lady Melton recalled him to the deepest attention.

“*Apropos* of gambling,” said her frolicsome ladyship, in relation to a tale that had been concluded on the subject just before, “do you know, Mr. Greville, what has become of poor Sacheverell?”

Mr. Jerningham glanced hastily at his wife, and then at Lord Haverdale. The eyes

of the Peer met his in a glance of peculiar meaning.

"He is recruiting on the continent, I believe," replied Greville; "they say his purse and constitution are equally dilapidated."

"Poor Sacheverell!" reiterated her ladyship; "and he was such a good rider, too."

"Yes," said Greville, "like the Erl King, he rode through everything; but he might have survived *that*, had not another misfortune clenched him. 'Sorrows come not single spies,' you know. Just as he was clearing himself from the Charybdis of the turf, he fell into the Scylla of the Prince of ——'s parties; and the last feathers were soon plucked from his wings."

"You knew him, did you not, Mr. Jerningham?" asked Lady Malton.

"I *have* met him," replied the host; "but it was generally out with the hounds. By the way," he continued, as if desirous of changing the conversation, "shall you ride to-morrow?"

The *ruse* was successful; her ladyship immediately flew off upon her favourite topics, leaving both Lord Haverdale and Mr. Jerningham somewhat overshadowed in their mirth. The latter gentleman soon after gave the well-

known signal; and his wife, rising with the rest of the ladies, moved away to the drawing-room.

In spite, however, of the diversion thus created, by which Mr. Jerningham and his guest escaped a subject that seemed distasteful, the effect of its introduction was visible in the graver tone which the conversation unconsciously assumed. Greville, who saw that some discordant string had been touched, strove in vain to fathom the cause. He recollected a vague report which had whispered that Haverdale was supposed to belong to the "set" who had ruined the young nobleman named Sacheverell; but no such stigma could possibly attach to Mr. Jerningham, and yet the same uneasy disrelish of the subject was no less evident in their host. It is a discomfort almost inseparable from society, that one can scarcely make the most trivial remark of a general nature without wounding somebody. There is sure to be some heart, in the weak point of which, like the undipped portion of Achilles' heel, the random arrow sticks its envenomed barb. Feeling certain that a blow of this kind had been struck in the present instance, Greville hastened to dissipate its

effects. With consummate tact he led the conversation into its former channel. The claret jugs began to circulate more briskly, the ruffled brows grew serene, and before they left the snoring countrymen to join the ladies, they were as full of fun and joviality as ever.

When the gentlemen entered the drawing-room, liveried servants were winding noiselessly about, bearing trays covered with delicate China cups with tea and coffee among the busy groups. It was difficult to trace the cause, but somehow people always *did* form into little coteries in that apartment—the shape was adapted for it. The windows retreated deeply in the massive walls, making little recesses, where ladies often lounged with a coquettish expectation that the *right* gentleman would follow. Nor were they often disappointed—it generally happened that the congenial spirits mingled up together, and flirtations flourished accordingly.

In a little nook beside the fire sat Madame de Meranie; and Lord Haverdale, casting off the absence of mind which had hitherto characterized his demeanour, threw himself into a *fauteuil* beside her, and was soon engaged in a conversation respecting her unhappy France.

Mr. Greville had found his way to the sofa, where Mrs. Jerningham and the Miss Gordons were fondling the infant heir. In many a quaint conceit did he foretell the young Edward's future career, and anticipate the time when the fair-haired scion of luxury would play his part in the game of life. And many merry jokes were cracked upon his advance from the swaddling clothes through the seven ages of our mortal span. He was to be nothing less than a senator, his life was to be a stream of success, his death a glorious exit, soothed with honours and crowned with laurels ; so prophesied the hopeful seers, while little Edward Jerningham smiled upon them from his mother's circling arms.

Suddenly the piano poured forth its blithe notes of invitation ; and Mr. Jerningham, who had been sunning himself before the fire, proposed that the tables should be cleared away for a dance. Christina Gordon immediately volunteered to play ; no one seemed likely to ask her partnership, and, besides, the sacrifice looked amiable. When the requisite space had been obtained, Lord Haverdale led out the fair Frenchwoman, and the host paired off with Aspasia Gordon. Mrs. Jerningham did not

dance, neither did Mr. Greville, if he could help it; but Lady Melton was near, and she instantly "marked him for her own."

"Mr. Greville," exclaimed the lady, with that freedom which always characterized her manners, setting opinion at absolute defiance, "do you positively intend to miss a cotillon?"

"Look at me, Lady Melton—I believe I seem tolerably resigned even to *that* calamity."

"But *I* am by no means so philosophical, Mr. Greville; so pray save me the trouble of asking *you*, by requesting the honour, &c., of dancing with me without any further delay."

"Your Ladyship is right," said Greville; "life is too short to admit the loss of a single pleasure—will you take me for better or worse in this cotillon? I am the worst dancer in the world."

"All clever men *are* bad dancers," replied Lady Melton graciously. Greville bowed with concise gravity to the compliment. "How is it," she continued, as they moved away, "that Terpsichore bestows all her favours upon fools?"

"The reason is obvious," replied Greville; "it is a merciful dispensation of Providence,

that those who have no talent in their brains should be compensated in their toes."

And so, chuckling over the novel definition, they whirled away with the rest in pursuit of flying time.

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The old hall clock had tolled the midnight hour ; the house was hushed ; the fairer guests, like flowers, had folded their beauties into slumber ; and the pale moonbeams slept upon tower and turret, and penetrated through the forest glades into the distant sea.

But one chamber shone brightly yet with fire and lamp. Its tenant sat listlessly, bending his pale hands over the glowing embers, until at length the door opened, and Mr. Jer-ningham entered. Lord Haverdale—for the chamber was his—nodded a silent recognition ; and after a space cards were produced, and they drew their chairs to the table, and placed the stakes.

The embers waned, the lamp grew dull, and the moonlight waxed fainter and more wan ; but still unconscious of aught beyond that narrow board, Mr. Jerningham sat hour after hour in the fever of play with Lord Haverdale.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW TANGLES IN THE WEB.

"Hiccup," said Mr. Lorrie Stocks, with an air of affable condescension, "would it give you the headache if I made you a present of a new idea?"

"What now, Lorrie?" replied Hiccup; "always joking, Lorrie—what's in the wind now?"

"A wind that blows everybody good," said Lorrie; "merry-makings for the masters, and fees for the men; masques and revels in the saloon, and perquisites in the servants' hall—we are going to invite the county to a grand ball."

"Indeed, Mr. Lorrie," said the landlord, in still broader tones, "you have a brave time of it; I hope you will remember me if there's anything wanted in *my* way."

"Hiccup!" exclaimed Lorrie again, "your sorrowful frontispiece is too like a death's-head in the old church-yard to be forgotten in

a hurry—I *have* remembered you. Mr. Screw, the butler, says to me, ‘ Mr. Stocks,’ says he, ‘ suppose *one* hand shouldn’t be enough in the cellar—suppose there should be a rush at supper time, and the boys don’t use it kindly—consider my feelings,’ says he, ‘ if the claret should be clouded, the crust of the ’87 port broken—it would break my heart.’ ”

“ Of course it would,” replied Hiccup, “ wine is as tender as an infant : even when it has been cradled and flannelled like the human creature, it sometimes defies the nurse, and sickens away.”

“ Yes,” answered Lorrie, “ wine is changeful as a woman’s temper, eh, Hiccup? How’s Mrs. Hiccup—still a little cranky in that point, eh? Well, never mind—so I mentioned you to Mr. Screw, and told him you’d treat the wine as tenderly as a babby ; and he says if you’ll come, he may do you a good turn with the master.”

“ Mr. Stocks,” said Hiccup, affectionately, “ you do me proud ; the gentlemen in the servants’ parlour shall find me there ; and now what will you have—purl, or a little brandy warm ? ”

As the host said this, he opened the bar-

door, and motioning Lorrie to enter, they sat down together in the snugger. The reeking concoction of purl, which *then* formed an ordinary morning draught, was placed before them; pipes were produced, and (Mrs. Hiccup being out) there was nothing to mar their ease. Hiccup sank into his arm-chair with a complacent grunt, and Lorrie lit the weed, and put his feet upon the hob with an air of languid elegance that defied description.

And here it may be asked, what magic spell had thus transformed the landlord's gall to the sweetness of the virgin honeycomb? Wherefore had the alkali of the scapegrace's wit failed to rouse the acid of Hiccup's bile into effervescence? In truth, a marvellous revolution had occurred in the affairs of Mr. Lorrie Stocks. In former times he was ragged as a moulting fowl; *now* his feathers were unruffled and spotless, he was sleeker than a swan—top boots and doeskin tights adorned his nether man; his shoulders were higher by the altitude of an epaulette; his hat sate jauntily in all the pride of a gold-cloth band. Lord Haverdale had been looking out for a shrewd domestic, who might be trusted in delicate emergencies; so when Lorrie called, the morning after his

arrival, he was enrolled at once in his lordship's service. The nature of his future employment had not been exactly defined; but as he expressed his conviction that he could do anything, and moreover engaged himself to do it, *that* was not very material. Thus Lorrie, with snake-like aptitude, had cast his olden skin; and those who "made mouths at him" in his days of poaching, and sneered at his tatterdemalian garments, now gazed with reverence upon the bright-winged butterfly that had suddenly emerged from the grub. So apt are weak-souled mortals to be blinded by a little glare—so like moths unable to resist the flame, even though it burns their wings—that Hiccup himself forgot the scapegrace of former times in the being who now strutted before him like a bantam in its spurs. And let us not judge the landlord harshly: wiser men than he have bowed before a wearer of purple and fine linen, more unyielding patriots have worshipped a coronetted button.

For upwards of two hours Lorrie sat in commune with the landlord of the Crooked Billet, pouring into his willing ears most marvellous accounts of the doings at Jerningham Hall, and relating everything with the air of a man

accustomed to splendour. At length the purl waxed low ; Mrs. Hiccup returned from a protracted gossip in the village ; and Lorrie, resisting the seductions of another pipe, thought it fit that he should shake hands and part. Reminding Hiccup of his engagement to Screw the butler, he left the snuggerly with a patronising benediction, and sauntered away down the winding lane as listlessly as his master could have done.

No sooner, however, had Lorrie passed the last straggling houses of the village, than he struck through a narrow pathway into the fields, and his manner changed to the thoughtful air of one who has business on hand. Taking out a clasp knife, he proceeded to cut a stout oaken staff from a sapling that grew near, and pruned off the superfluous twigs until it assumed the shape both of a walking-stick and a weapon of defence. Then he buttoned his coat up to his chin, pulled his hat firmly over his eyes ; and these arrangements being completed, he set forward as before.

It was a glorious morning in the open fields, warm, yet vigorous with western winds, beautiful in unclouded sunshine. Nature revelled in her accumulated wealth, as if enjoyment

were doubled by the knowledge of its approaching close—earth, the reckless epicurean, only smiled the more sweetly at the recollection that winter was near, with its twin sisters, death and desolation. It was one of those days that equalises poverty and splendour. The peasant, who paused from toil to wipe his brow, looked up at that azure sky, and drank in beauty from its placid light; he turned his cheek to the breeze, and drank in health as from an elixir; he gazed round on the fair world in its fairest robes, and his spirit was soothed with the happiness of content. Could the prince command more? No! then and there royalty itself had been merely human.

Amid this “melody of woods and winds and waters,” passed Lorrie Stocks upon his way, until the stunted brushwood and furze through which he trod began to thicken into woody land. He then advanced more carefully, not only to avoid tripping over the rugged and deceptive ground, but because the end of his journey was at hand, and caution became necessary. At length he reached the borders of the heath, which was separated from the wood beyond by a narrow high road. Here he paused to collect himself for a moment. He

wetted his hand to render his grasp firmer upon the staff, and, hearing voices, listened to catch the direction whence they came. Guided less by these sounds than by a thin stream of smoke that curled upward through the forest branches, he at last stepped across the road, and plunged into the entangled mazes of the wood. The twining briars, that seemed impenetrable to one unacquainted with the secret path, were easily overcome by Lorrie, who wound through their devious avenues with the unerring tact of perfect familiarity. By dint of leaping over some obstacles, stooping to creep below others, and using the staff as a pioneer, he advanced slowly for about a hundred yards, when suddenly the sunlight burst upon an open space. Some twenty or thirty men, women, and children were stretched here and there, lounging in every attitude of the *dolce far niente*; the poles of a tent were erected, but without their covering; and in the midst, over a fierce fire, bubbled a huge blackened kettle, whence issued savoury streams that whispered of dinner—it was the gipsy encampment. Whatever signs of hesitation had been hitherto visible in Lorrie's manner were now studiously banished. He walked straight into

the centre of the group, and flung himself indolently on the sward beside the roguish-looking urchin who presided over the cookery. The first impulse of the gang at his sudden apparition did not appear entirely peaceful, but the second glance brought a cry of recognition that was apparently satisfactory to all.

“Lorrie Stocks!” cried a tall, brown fellow with a herculean frame, “and in this guise, too! How is it you have not gone to the devil ere now?”

“Because, my greenwood Samson, I feared to meet *you* there,” replied Lorrie, with ready aptitude. “A pestilence on your ill name! have I not suffered enough in reputation from knowing you in this world to make me avoid you in the other? Where is Ayesha?”

“She will be here anon,” replied the fellow; “but what brings you to our camp? You are in rare plumage for a village castaway.”

“What brings me!” cried Lorrie; “that is a hospitable question, truly. Considering the hares and pheasants that I have brought to the nest in old times, methinks you may well afford a meal from the common pot. As to the plumes you speak of, there is a tale in their sleekness that bears upon you and yours, my

tawny linen-snatcher; so when the dinner comes my story shall come too."

"You are welcome," said a soft voice behind him; and when he turned, the gipsy queen stood by his side. He sprung hastily to his feet, and seizing the hand which she extended, he kissed it with the air of a subject. "Shingle," she continued, addressing the swarthy gipsy by the name he had acquired in some past exploit, "has any one wandered near the den?"

"No," replied Shingle, "all snug as a swallow's nest."

"Then call the crew with your whistle," said Ayesha, "but not too loud, there are hawks abroad—sit here, Lorrie;" and she pointed to a stool beside her. "Shingle, look to the pot, and dip in your knife for our guest; if he is as famished as I am, he could tear a wild cat."

These orders were given with the tone of one accustomed to implicit obedience. Lorrie spread an old plaid cloak upon the little hillock where Ayesha stood, and she sat down upon it in a position that showed the beauty of her person in its most graceful perfection, and also enabled her to see every member of the frater-

nity. At the sound of Shingle's familiar call the gipsy brethren left their various employments, and concentrated themselves round the cauldron. Others, too, who had been out of sight, now poured from the recesses of the wood, where they had been engaged in different pursuits.

The whole clan was soon assembled, presenting a strange and motley group. There was every shade of age and appearance—old men and young men, brawny manhood and mischievous juvenility; women wan and withered as the witches in *Macbeth*; mothers with their offspring at the breast; and young girls, dark as night, who were yet unmated. But in each and all the resemblance was visible which marks them, like the Jews, with its national and unmistakeable impress. They seemed to be wanderers in an uncongenial soil. The deep glowing eye of inky blackness, the profusion of raven hair—above all, the eastern warmth of colouring in the cheek, had nothing in unison with the cold skies of the west: they looked like figures taken from a picture of an African desert or the pastoral fields of Arabia.

In obedience to the command of Ayesha, a

long three-pronged fork was introduced by Shingle into the steaming pot, and the first thing that presented itself being a partridge, it was handed to Lorrie. The queen was then assisted to something of a similar description, and the rest of the crew helped themselves without further ceremony. Many a time and oft did that long-handled instrument descend into the mysterious depths of the cauldron, and it was wondrous to see the varied delicacies that were brought to light. The poultry-yard, the rabbit-warren, and the slaughterer's shop had all poured their treasures into its womb. The viands passed round ; some foaming October ale made its appearance as if by magic, the potency of which, aided by the exhilarating influence of the unshadowed sky, gradually unlocked the floodgates of conversation, and the women began to chatter like a legion of magpies, while the men laughed and sung, and related stories of their wandering experience, until the forest glade resembled an enormous beehive with the perpetual hum. Excepting the queen, whose title to royalty was not birth, but beauty, there was no difference of rank ; and the forms and ceremonies were few in that free and easy society—a circumstance which

rendered it perhaps rather more jovial than otherwise. Lorrie, who had once been intimately connected with the gang, looked quite as much "at home" among them as ever, and dissected the partridge in his shirt sleeves, and quaffed the home-brewed, telling at the same time the tale of his conversion from the vagabond to the gentleman's gentleman.

"And now," he added, in conclusion, "you had better keep close for a time. The master has got scent of your doings among the game; and if he sees your vagrant faces on the highway after *that*, you will be pounded with no more ceremony than if you were donkeys—so look out, my kids!"

"There are other parts where the crew can raise their tents," said Shingle; "we are not like trees, that die out of their own earth. Let's strike the camp, and be gone!"

Several voices applauded the proposition with exclamations of approval; but Lorrie did not seem to participate in this summary view, for he darted a hasty look of warning at Ayesha.

"What occasion for that?" he continued. "Why not lie snug for a week or two, mending your nets and traps, until they think you

are off? Then you will be ready for the Lunnun gen'lemen, who are coming down with their purses full of shiners."

"Right, Lorrie!" said Ayesha; "the reapers must not be absent when the harvest is at hand. We will stay, Shingle."

The gipsy nodded his assent; but the accompanying look seemed to intimate that his acquiescence was given rather to her beauty than her opinion. Turning from his ardent gaze, she bent the full lustre of her eyes upon Lorrie, in a glance that marked her perception of his hidden meaning.

And the birds were hushed into languid silence upon the branches; the clustered leaves rustled in their multitude, like waves ebbing and flowing over a pebbled beach. Not a human being was in sight. The sun seemed to shed light, and the air to breathe odour, only for them. There were none near to share the mossy velvet of the sward, or the unshaded beauty of the broad blue sky—none, save these ragged wanderers of the fair but slighted earth.

"Come," cried Shingle, casting his flagon towards the beaker for replenishment, "let us fill, and drink to Ayesha."

Pour it blithely forth ;
Let the fogs of the north
 Be drowned in foaming October !
Let ale mantle up
In each old horn cup !
 A curse on the slave who keeps sober !

In accordance with the virtuous sentiment contained in this fragment of an old ballad, the ale was briskly circulated, and as briskly quaffed to the health of the Queen ; while Lorrie, who was too happy to make a speech, returned thanks on her behalf, concluding, in florid periods, with the proposition that Ayesha should acknowledge the loyalty by singing a song. The request was caught up and re-echoed by the rest amid deafening plaudits ; so she raised herself a little higher upon the hillock that formed her throne, and expressed her acquiescence in a radiant smile. The melody she chose was rather soft than bacchanalian ; but its pensive vigour accorded with the half-polished nature of the words, which seemed to hint at some tradition current among their tribe. Bursting into natural harmony with the spontaneous power of a bird, she sang the following stanzas :—

AYESHA'S SONG.

When shall the gipsy rule again
O'er the realms that once were hers ?
Or spread her tents on an eastern plain
O'er the nation of wanderers ?

When, as of old, shall the gipsy horde
Rove free in its native land,
Where the holy sun is the only lord
Of the plain and desert sand ?

Ah, many a spring must glide away,
And many a pulse be stilled,
And many a summer see decay,
Ere destiny be fulfilled !

Then from the wilds of each distant zone,
And the shores of each far-spread sea,
Shall the gipsies hasten to claim their own,
And revel in liberty.

Drink to the time, the merry time,
When none but love's chains shall bind us !
Drink to the clime, the burning clime,
For which we leave this behind us !

And the listeners, who had waved their cups
in frantic excitement during the last verse,
now took up the burden of the song, and
joined in a final chorus—

Drink to the queen, the gipsy queen !
Drink to her eagle eyes !
Many may share her smiles, I ween ;
But *who* shall share her sighs ?

" Ah, ah, tuneful as ever," cried Lorrie.
" With such a nightingale to give them songs
at eve, the gipsies are a merry crew."

" Aye, aye, we are blither than the cricket,"
replied Shingle ; " you have nothing like this
among your fine birds at the Hall."

" Nothing at all resembling it," said Lorrie ;
and the contrast of the scene around with the
splendours of Jerningham House made him
chuckle inwardly with a rich sense of the
comic.

" Poor things !" continued Shingle, in a
tone of exquisite pity, " they don't know the
joy of a carouse in the greenwood, or a hunt-
ing start for game when the moon is full.
They don't know what it is to be free. We
aint afraid of pressing the carpets here"—and
he pointed to the moss on which he reclined—
" or of knocking the gilt off nature's works,
'cause all things are made for use as well as
comeliness."

" There are worse lives than the gipsy's,"
said Ayesha, absently.

“None so good,” answered Shingle: “why, these high-and-mightinesses have to bend like pines before the wind of court favour. When they look out of their carriage-windows so sleek and prim, they are no more happy than caged lions, grinning through the bars, at a show. The gipsy’s life for ever!” Emptying his cup once more, Shingle cast it aside, and commenced without further prelude, to sing a rude description of the life he vaunted.

THE GIPSY’S LIFE.

King Georgie rules o’er a court of fools,
And lolls in hired embraces;
But the gipsy’s the lord of the velvet sward—
The monarch of pleasant places.
The peasant may guard his poultry-yard,
And the noble his antlered deer;
But they cannot refuse to yield their dues
To the pot that is bubbling here.

Each bird that skims, each fish that swims,
We snare from woodland and sedge;
Our mossy bed on the heath is spread,
And our shirts grow on every hedge.
We conjure a charm o’er the maiden’s palm,
To know if her lover be true;
We take the gold of the traveller bold,
And he goes lighter too.

Then pour the ale forth ; let the fogs of the north
Be drowned in foaming October !
Let its froth mantle up in each old horn cup !
A curse on the slave who keeps sober !
We'll drink, till we're tipsy, Success to the gipsy !
Earth and men yield their wealth to him ;
And he sets at nought any chain that is wrought
To fetter his iron limb.

When the last echoes of this exciting chorus had died away, there was a general movement among the gang. Some of them sauntered away to their former occupations, while others composed themselves drowsily to enjoy the luxury of a nap. The moment of action had now come for Lorrie, who whispered a few words aside to Ayesha, and then leisurely donned his coat again, in preparation for departure. Having shrouded her form and face in the ample folds of her scarlet hood, the queen also prepared to accompany him—a circumstance that caused little comment, and was easily explained to Shingle and the rest. She recalled to their memory the news which they had heard from Lorrie, and, forbidding any one to wander from the camp during her absence, she followed her conductor into the depths of the forest.

CHAPTER V.

WE may pass over the brief and interjectional converse which took place at intervals between Lorrie and Ayesha, as they pursued the track dictated by the former. Each was inclined to silence ; Lorrie by the responsibility of his present trust and the reminiscences awakened at the sight of his old haunts, and the beautiful Ayesha remained voiceless with the power of emotions that searched her inmost heart.

Silently, therefore, they threaded their way through the forest, past oaks that spread their branches widely in protecting shade, past pines that shot upward like spears into the sky, up soft hill sides, where the violets peeped timidly ; and at length the trees grew fewer, and they wound across a heath, and down a rugged defile to the shell-strewn beach. Emerging from their rocky path, they stood upon the shore, and before them lay, in a semicircular sweep of unbroken beauty, the fresh smiling sea. Ayesha seated herself upon a jutting

portion of the cliff, and clasped her hands upon her bosom in an attitude of expectation, while Lorrie hastened along the ribbed pathway of the sands, and, turning a sudden promontory, approached a merry group of the party from Jerningham Hall.

'The Lady's Cave—as the cavern was called in which they were assembled—was a favourite resort of excursion parties, and formed indeed one of the most interesting specimens of a natural cell that has been discovered in England. It penetrated darkly into the rugged cliff for more than a hundred yards, the only light which illumined its inner recesses being conveyed through occasional gaps in the earth above. Owing to the intrusion of the sea with every tide, the more remote depths were thickly covered with sea-weed, and that strange sound which haunts a sea-shell was ever audible along its glittering halls. This fitful harmony, produced no doubt by the action of the wind on some peculiar formation of the rock, had given rise to no few traditions and goblin tales among the neighbouring tenantry, and many a sturdy peasant secretly believed that the ocean dwellers sought refuge there from the conflict of the storm. One or two even averred that

they had seen dark figures emerge from the cave when the moon was full, and, as that portion of the coast was infested with smugglers of more than ordinary daring, this portion of the current fables might be tolerably correct.

A very different scene, however, was now enacting there. Within the Cave were scattered various relics of a luncheon that had recently been under discussion; champagne bottles and corks were interspersed with fragments of venison pasty and divers other condiments; the masses of rock had been converted into tables and chairs, and Friar Tuck could scarcely have done greater justice to luxurious fare than each of the party here had evinced in demolishing stately pyramids of paste and game, nor could the sea nymphs have made themselves more perfectly at home. But the close of the revel was now drawing near. The carriages were expanding their emblazoned pannels to waft their owners back, the horses stood in attendance for gentlemen who had chosen the saddle in preference to the chariot cushions, and all was bustle of servants and rustling of dresses, while lively repartee flew from every lip. Lord Haverdale alone re-

mained silent and impassive beside his magnificent mare. His head bent down to Lorrie, who spoke to him in a low confidential tone for a moment, and his former manner was then resumed, as if he were rather a spectator than an actor in the scene before him. The preparatory arrangements were completed, and the company just on the verge of starting, when Greville galloped up into the midst of them.

"Greville, by all that's wonderful!" exclaimed Mr. Jerningham; "why, where have you been hiding yourself to-day?—editorial engagements, eh?"

"Nothing so pleasant," said Greville, with a comic horror on his countenance.

"Have you been trying to clear a difficult fence, or gallop off a cold?" inquired Lady Melton.

"Worse still," said Greville; "I met Middleton, that dreariest specimen of a country gentleman, and have striven in vain to gallop *him* off."

"Ah, as Beatrice says, if you have caught the Middleton, it shall cost you a thousand pound ere you be cured—prosy as ever, eh?"

"I should strongly recommend you never

to walk with him through a burial-place after dark," replied Greville.

"Et pourquoi non?" asked her ladyship.

"Because, my dear Lady Melton, his pro-si-ness would make the churchyards yawn, and set the graves gaping."

"I shall certainly not walk the night with him after that," said Lady Melton, amid the general laughter; "but we will talk to you instead—so pray come round to my side."

"'The *belle* invites me,'" answered the ready humourist; and he spurred his steed to the side of Lady Melton's britschka. Poor Greville! who could have recognised in that bright countenance and merry tongue the care-worn being who had bent over the desk for eight mortal hours of the previous night! "Does not Lord Haverdale join us?" he said, as they began to move.

"I must follow," answered the peer; "my fellow says that Starlight is rather overheated; after five minutes or so I shall catch you *en route*."

"*Au revoir*, then!" said Mr. Jerningham. "By the way, your lordship's coat is soiled with chalk."

"Ah! I feared so," replied Haverdale; "my

mare met a sailor coming along, and jerked me against the cliff; she always shies at a vulgar man."

With this characteristic explanation, Lord Haverdale relapsed into his former silence. The conversation ceased, the carriages rolled off, and the rattle of their wheels soon died away in the distance. When the last echoes had become inaudible, he waved his hand to Lorrie in token of dismissal; and the servitor obeyed as he had been schooled, without a word of remonstrance or remark. Then, and not till then, Haverdale raised his head from the arched neck of his mare, and throwing the rein over his arm, he wound along the beach towards the promontory which Lorrie had previously passed. Snorting in playful scorn at the slight barrier of waves which was offered by the advancing tide, Starlight pranced over them as proudly as if they were the necks of fallen enemies, and in another moment they stood upon the firm sand on the opposite side, no longer amid the fashionable crowd of loiterers from the Hall, but in the presence of the dark-eyed Ayesha.

He sat down beside her on the jutting rock, and took her hand in his. All the accustomed

coldness of his manner had vanished, and soft were the words, subtle were the accents of the impassioned torrent of eloquence which he now poured into her ear. He urged her instant flight with him, he dilated on the necessity of her emancipation from the horde. The wealth which he offered her had never been painted in brighter colours, nor love in a more alluring form. The reserve she had at first exhibited was gradually melting away, a tear stood in either eye as she yielded to his more warm embrace, when suddenly a rustling sound issued from the brushwood above them, and Starlight pricked her ears and gave vent to a protracted neigh.

They started forward, and gazed up the shelving cliff, but no one was visible. They were the only lingerers on that solitary shore.

“Let us leave it,” said Haverdale, when the interruption had passed away, and he sat once more beside her; “let us leave for ever this life which your spirit must despise—a life which subjects you to the society of companions so rude—a calling which every peasant may embitter by his insolent breath—neither your mind nor your beauty was ever meant for it, Ayesha: fly with me to scenes where

my wealth can render you as happy as you deserve."

"I dare not," she murmured sadly; "even now I speak to you in peril—to desert my brethren were death!"

"We will avoid all fear in other climes," replied Haverdale; "there are skies more bright than these, Ayesha, and lands more genial, where we can make our home."

"Alas! you know us not," she answered with a mournful smile; "there are few spots on earth where the gipsy wanderers do not dwell, and the asylum must indeed be secure where the knife cannot penetrate, when revenge makes it vigilant to kill. No, no! let us part—if I have listened to your words, and yielded to dreams of love, it was the weakness of a moment—consider it so, and forget it. What can a rank like yours have in common with such a destiny as mine?"

A wild flash passed over her countenance as she spoke—an expression of many conflicting emotions; the first was pride, but it soon disappeared before the sorrowful look of despair, which showed how deeply she felt the sacrifice she proposed.

"My own Ayesha!" said Haverdale, pres-

sing her closer to his heart, "there is a love that needs no bonds to fix its faith, a love fervent and warm as the Egyptian clime from which they say your nation sprung; this love shall be ours, unfettered by the church, unknown to the world, the affection of kindred souls."

"It cannot be!" sighed the beautiful listener. And yet how intently her heart drank in every syllable that fell from the lips which addressed her. "It cannot be; have I not already read your fate?—life spreads before you in a tranquil stream that should never mingle with the troubled waters of *my* existence—you are a noble!"

"And if loveliness made royalty you were a queen!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"A queen!" she answered with an hysteric laugh; "aye, queen of the gipsies—an outcast and a wanderer over the earth. No more!" she added, after a pause, during which she had collected her expiring resolution with a violent effort; "let our paths henceforth be asunder; as they were ordained; unloose me—we must part."

"Ayesha!" cried Haverdale, struggling gently but firmly to detain her—"one word

more—say we shall meet again—that you are not for ever lost to—.”

Before he could finish the sentence, a long shrill whistle echoed past them; and at the sound Ayesha sprung from his embrace as if it had been the coil of an adder. He was about to make another effort to detain her, when a dark figure descended to the ground between them—it was Shingle, who had leapt from the ledge of brushwood above, and who now confronted Lord Haverdale. The last floating drapery of Ayesha's dress had vanished among the rocks for several minutes before the noble lord sufficiently recovered the surprise of her sudden disappearance to turn upon the intruder who had stopped their colloquy. At length he gave vent to an angry exclamation, and grasping his riding-whip more securely, he moved towards his steed, and placed his hand upon the pommel of the saddle. The gipsy then folded his arms, and placed himself directly in the path, with an insulting exclamation of contempt.

There was a remarkable contrast between the two men as they stood opposed to each other in the silence of that breathless moment. The dark eyes of Shingle gleamed from among

the matted tangles of his hair in deadly hate, his nostrils were distended like those of an infuriate brute, every vein in his face and forehead seemed bursting with animal rage. Lord Haverdale, on the contrary, exhibited little sign of emotion—there was scarcely any unusual fire even in his eye, it was only in the curled tremulousness of the pale chiselled lip that his suppressed passion was perceptible.

“ Out of my path, ruffian, or I will spurn you from it !” he exclaimed at last to the intruding Shingle.

“ Oh ho !” cried the gipsy, “ *you* spurn me ! stay awhile—we have a score to settle before you depart.”

“ Delay but a moment, and I will strike you down !” reiterated Haverdale through his clenched teeth.

Shingle made no reply except by raising a stout sapling branch which he held in his hand, and aiming a heavy blow at his opponent. The attack was sudden, but not unexpected by Haverdale, who was one of the best fencers of his day. Almost at the same moment the weapon was diverted harmlessly from his person by a rapid ward, and his loaded riding-whip descended on Shingle’s skull with a

violence that felled him to the ground. Not casting a single look on the prostrate figure of his opponent, Haverdale then darted into the saddle, and spurred Starlight to her utmost speed.

The sand flew fast and far from her winged heels, the noise of her hoofs grew rapidly indistinct, and there was nothing to wake the torpor of the insensible gipsy, save the sighing of the wind through the Lady's Cave, or the eternal tumble of the ocean waters.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW evenings after the occurrences recorded in our last chapter, such a scene of bustle was displayed in Jerningham Hall, and such a blaze of festal light flashed through every window from turret to basement of that brave old pile, that it was evident something unusual had been devised by its pleasure-loving inhabitants. The park gates were thrown open ; the carriage-drive, which led to the door of the mansion, was lighted with flaming torches ; and by the aid of their weird-like glimmer, chariots, britschkas, unwieldy family coaches, and lighter conveyances of bachelor build, rolled along in rapid succession, with overflowing freights of beauty and rank. In fact it was the night of Mr. Jerningham's yearly ball, at which Lorrie had commissioned Hiccup to officiate, and to which the county people had been invited from every point of the compass. As it came like a Christmas Box, " but once a year," it was of course sufficient aliment for rural conversation

during the whole of the month previous ; and there was no end of discussion among the ladies as to the dresses to be worn on this important occasion. A few of the younger daughters of neighbouring younger sons had, with dire misgivings, trusted their "toilettes" to the preadamite inventions of the country milliners, but the majority of the rustic beauties had sent such unlimited orders to town, that bandboxes had studded the coaches as thickly as barnacles cover an ocean rock.

This annual act of hospitality being, moreover, a very formal affair, it gave rise to great anxieties and heart-burnings, and jealousy and feud. Nor was Mr. Jerningham's task an easy one, of reconciling the antagonistic elements ; for if he bowed lower to the pretty wife of the sheriff than to the turbaned squaw of the pompous old mayor, the latter functionary resented it for twelve months after, with an animosity that threw the hate of a Guelph to a Ghibelline utterly in the shade. A continual struggle, too, was always proceeding between the native aborigines and the accidental settlers in or near Violetdale. Woe to the hapless grocer who has made a "plum !" woe to the rich parvenu who has retired from trade to a

country mansion, under the delusion that county gentlemen will admit him to the dullness of their dinners, or that county ladies will accord him the inanity of their association. Many a scion of Plutus has only left his counter in "Chepe" to perish beneath the thousand petty insults which those who dwell in the *Paradise* of fashion delight in wreaking upon neophytes beyond the threshold. Yet the cobbler will not stick to his last—the shopkeeper will not stick to the shop which has stuck so faithfully to *him*. No—he must breathe the atmosphere of "the high regions, where the pure forms dwell;"* and so, through proud men's contumely, he struggles up, wriggling himself, eel-like, into the society that loathes his contact. Every country place of any fame for beauty or respectability is subject to this invasion of the Vandals of Bow-bell, nor was Violetdale exempt from inroads of plebeian wealth.

The task of reception, fortunately, was no new one to Mr. Jerningham; and he stood near the entrance of his illumined Hall, be-

* "In den heitern Regionen
Wo die reinen Formen wohnen."

SCHILLER.

stowing on each arrival that exact degree of recognition which circumstance demanded. Arrayed in the stiff but courtly fashion of the day, his black silk stockings, black satin knee-breeches, blue coat, and waistcoat of spotless white adorned a person of full but not overgrown symmetry; and the impress of good birth was stamped as indelibly upon his features as the distinctive royalty on the forehead of the lion. Perhaps, on the present occasion, this expression was heightened by a certain shade of pensiveness which contracted his ample brow, overshadowing his natural disposition to wild and even brusque hilarity. Beyond him, in a farther saloon of the suite, the fair hostess mingled with her guests; and while the visitors are clustering around this gay centre of "nods and becks and wreathèd smiles," we will transport the reader to a different part of the mansion.

Lounging listlessly in an ample *fauteuil*, before the fire, in his chamber, sat Lord Haverdale; and Lorrie was moving about the apartment, leisurely putting in preparation his master's toilette for the evening ball. At length the various garments were laid in readiness, and the adjuncts of the dressing-table

were arranged by the nimble hand of the servitor. Still no symptom of interest escaped the peer, but he continued to gaze absently upon the fire, with his usual apathy. Occasionally, indeed, a cloud of uneasiness shaded his cheek for a moment, and made him turn restlessly on his easy chair: the emotion, however, was fleeting—it soon faded as it came. It would seem that some conversation had passed between them before; for Lord Haverdale suddenly broke the silence, as if he were resuming a subject already discussed.

“You saw this rascal in the shrubbery?” he said, with the slow tone of an inquiry. “Are you certain of the identity? it was dusk, you say?”

“Couldn’t mistake, my Lord,” replied Lorrie; “*his* gallows face is like nothing else in the world, except it is the visage of the Evil One, in which Parson Pringle says all ill things are writ. I saw Shingle as plain as I see you, my Lord. He was standing among the evergreens just beneath the hall-window; but before I reached the lawn, he was off. The gates, you know, were open; so *that* was easy enough.”

“I would rather the waves had swallowed him up from the sand where he lay sprawling,

than he should have tracked me here," said Haverdale, angrily. "'Sdeath!" he muttered to himself, in a lower tone, "am I to sacrifice my life to this prowling forest-brute, for the sake of a gipsy's black eyes?" Again he moved restlessly on his chair; and that inexplicable feeling of uneasiness overcame him which seizes on the bravest when in dread of a danger that strikes unseen. Fear, however, was no accustomed tenant in the proud breast of the noble; its momentary influence speedily waned before thoughts of a softer kind. A tender flush passed over his countenance, belying the indifference conveyed in his last words; and after a short pause, he spoke again, in a more subdued but not less eager voice.

"And this witch of the greenwood," he continued—"have you seen her?"

"Yes, my Lord—all right *there*. She made out her tale to the crew; and, as Shingle was drunk, *she* was believed. So," added Lorrie, "I delivered your Lordship's message; and the trysting-place is the road on the edge of the heath, three nights from this, when the moon will be full. The mark is the old oak that hangs over the pathway."

“And what did her manner denote?” asked Haverdale, with an interest he could not suppress; “did you gather aught of her intention from her voice or eye?”

“Nothing,” replied Lorrie; “he must be a cunning student of humanity who could read the dark face of Ayesha when she chose its tablets to be blank. Only *one* thing was visible—she seemed *resolved*.”

“And so am *I*!” exclaimed the noble, rising, with a look of triumph that cast all the former shadows from his face. During a few minutes he paced the apartment from end to end; and *then* the unusual sensation of excitement died away, and he commenced the arrangement of his neglected toilette.

Lorrie—the subtle servitor, full of care as a courtier to humour his master’s foibles, watchful as a prime minister to make himself agreeable where his interest rendered it necessary to please—was rapidly becoming indispensable, from his diplomatic talents. He fostered his master’s weakness for the queenly gipsy, with a keen perception that, whatever might be its result, the agent of its progress must acquire something, at least in

confidence, from being permitted to share the secret. But his sense of this increased power was never permitted to escape; and there could have been no better cloak devised than the humorous levity which characterized Lorie's conversation. In his usual strain, he now proceeded to season the operation of dressing his master with comic sketches of the company arriving below; and when Lord Haverdale cast a final glance over the elegant form which his large cheval glass reflected back, every mental cloud had vanished from the horizon, leaving on his brow its wonted unruffled serenity. Thus he sauntered down-stairs among the fashionable, the beautiful, and the young, who were assembled in the ball-room, dreaming not that, in his late determination, an arrow had been drawn from the quiver of Fate, which was destined to sheathe its deadly barb in one heart's warmest blood.

The hall to which he descended was no scene where reverie could brood undisturbed. Everything that could awaken pleasure or banish thought seemed collected there; and the massive grandeur of the hall itself, filled with beauty and rank, and flashing in the splendour

of innumerable lights, was so perfect in its kind, that we may pause here to describe it more fully.

The floor and walls were of polished oak, which almost mirrored the passer-by; the windows were grated, and deeply set in the masonry. Large antique pictures had been inserted in each of the wainscots, reaching almost from the floor to the ceiling; and though time had nearly effaced the colours of the limner, the softened outlines were still distinguishable upon their darkened canvas. Shadowy and mysterious in their stern repose, the visored brows of those old knights frowned portentously upon the beholder, as if—"but that they were forbid to tell the secrets of their prison-house"—they could whisper unguessed secrets, and breathe tales of the past into his ear, that would make him tremble. Every dark glance of their proud eyes seems to follow wherever you turn, with a desire to burst the bonds of death, and speak of what they know; every ring of their armour, every rusted falchion at their sides, appears fraught with a meaning that yearns to find vent in words. And what deep enigmas could they not solve—what mysteries that have never been laid bare!

How could their bodiless voices reveal the secret springs that urged mankind to actions which now seem incomprehensible—telling the hidden links of court intrigue with which monarchical destiny has been woven, the ruthless paths of blood through which ambition has waded to power, perhaps even murmuring hoarsely of darker deeds—of the orphan trampled down, of the enemy stealthily removed by an assassin's knife, and never revenged, or even missed, amid the troubles of civil convulsion! Pregnant with fearful wisdom seem those unembodied representatives of departed time.

Passing above these, and the antlers and bows which were tastefully arranged into grotesque devices, mingled with weapons used two or three centuries before in warfare and the pursuits of the chase, the eye fell on curious figures of ancient workmanship with which the ceiling was decorated. Well known scenes of historic rapine were there somewhat rudely depicted, interspersed ever and anon with peering faces of varied cast and expression. Here a cherub smiled palely and spiritually, beyond it a female countenance looked archly down, bearing in its dimmed cheek no small

trace of the mischievous humour originally planted there by the designer ; and then again, in a quiet nook which you would have chosen for the shrine of a more retiring god, a full-faced cherry-lipped Bacchant laughed from his lofty resting-place, as if holding his sides would be a vain restraint upon his mirth.

On entering the hall, Haverdale was struck with a certain want of keeping that seemed to exist between this ancient grandeur and the modern garb and manner of the Epicurean revellers who now were crowded within its precincts. It seemed like a modern tenement attached to a tower of Eld, where the ivy was wreathed and the battlements were gray, making the bricks and mortar more offensive from the contrast. He missed the train and the hoop, the Elizabethan ruff, and the stately cavalier arrayed in cloth of gold ; he looked for forms that reminded him of the graceful Leicester, of the accomplished Raleigh, of the fascinating Essex, for love of whom England's great queen died broken-hearted. There was little in the present company to remind him of these glorious constellations of a chivalric age, when the world was really a *stage*, and life a drama full of pageantry and brilliant colouring.

Yet remember we that if the poetry of existence dissolves before the progress of the Real, the sun of the present sheds more pure and effulgent rays than the departed planet. The utopia of which poets dream advances on the wings of *improvement*—the “Golden Age” has yet to come.

Casting off with an effort these speculative musings, Haverdale mingled with the crowd, and as it was late when he entered, every one had arrived, and the amusements of the evening were at their height. Wonderful to relate, the general aspect of affairs was satisfactory. Miss Christina Gordon had found a young curate for a partner, and she was quite startling that spiritual shepherd with her volubility on the subject of missionaries. Aspasia, the learned and the blue—but such, alas! are the freaks which fortune delights to play upon helpless humanity—was linked for the time being to a famous hunting man; and at each pause in the dance this scion of Nimrod told her a tale about one of his horses, and finished with an oath, which would have made the old ladies’ hair stand on end who happened to hear him, only it also happened that they generally wore *wigs*. So disgusted was the

lettered fair one at her companion, that she sat down at the end of the dance, and could not be persuaded to rise again until her sister whispered that the gentleman jockey in question had five thousand a-year to give away with the horny paw which he called his hand. In an heroic spirit worthy of a warrior of ancient Rome, Mr. Jerningham had sacrificed himself to the lady of the mayor before mentioned, and was figuring away in a cotillon with desperate gravity. Gazing upon him from her sofa, sat the hostess of the Hall, her fair cheek lit with a laughing smile, which betokened alike a comic sense of his situation, and the deep under-current of affection that always made her glad when he was near. As she turned, she saw Lord Haverdale, and motioned him towards her. At the same instant Madame de Meranie was led to the sofa by her cavalier, so he found himself between the hostess and the no less enchanting Frenchwoman.

“ I began to think you had hidden yourself to-night, you came down so late,” said Mrs. Jerningham; “ confess now—I believe you hesitated whether you should waste your

sweetness on the desert air of our drawing-room this evening."

"If that were possible, my dear madam," replied the gallant Haverdale, "it could only have been as Adam felt *ennui* in Paradise, perishing from the intoxication of sweets."

"There, Madame de Meranie!" exclaimed Mrs. Jerningham, "never complain again that Englishmen are incapable of a compliment—'*sauvages et barbares!*'"

"I do not say that the English are impolite," answered the beautiful daughter of la belle France, "I only say that they are not so *gallant* as Frenchmen—the English make better husbands, the French better lovers."

"A *real* husband is an impossible phenomenon in France," said Haverdale; "Moliere has laughed, Voltaire has sneered, and Rousseau has sentimentalized, until the object of their satire is nearly extinct; the whole force of their odium and ridicule has been launched upon the husband, whilst all possible '*prestige*' has been shed like a halo round the lover."

As he concluded these words, he looked casually upon Madame de Meranie, and saw her eye fixed with a curious expression of pity

and contempt upon a figure that stood near—it was that of her little snuffy husband, who appeared even more insignificant than usual from the proximity of the manly frame of Mr. Jerningham, who leant beside him. Well divining the application of his words which such a glance betrayed, Haverdale continued to gaze upon her, and suddenly her eyes shifted and met *his*. A bright flush suffused her face and neck, and then she grew pale, and her breast heaved beneath its drapery with an emotion she could not restrain. Accustomed to curb every impulse, and conceal every thought, Haverdale gave no sign of the emotion he had witnessed, but in *that* glance a secret dawned upon him which he had not suspected. He became more *émpressé* in his attentions to Madame de Meranie during the rest of the evening.

“Do you give literature credit for exercising so much influence upon mankind?” asked Mrs. Jerningham, upon whom this bye-play had been lost, so much more quickly does the face speak than the pen.

“The world is always ruled by a few moving spirits,” replied Haverdale; “they are the fathers of almost every idea that passes

current amongst us 'children of a larger growth.' "

"Then here comes one who has a large paternity to answer for," said Mrs. Jerningham, as Greville joined the group. Lady Melton was on his arm, and they were running over with fun as impetuously as if their comic veins had just begun to flow after a long stoppage.

"Thank heaven," said Greville, in reply to the hostess, "I have no paternity to answer for—."

"Except that of a large family of jokes," interposed Lady Melton; "this impertinent editor says now that *I* ought to have entered Parliament."

"*Comment?*" queried Madame de Meranie.

"Because I should have made such a capital *whipper in*," added her sporting ladyship; "there's impudence for you—the next time he mounts a horse I will take him through every bog for twenty miles round."

"If you do, I will tell the tale about the toll-keeper," replied Greville, with a malicious smile.

"Good heavens! what has he manufactured now?" said Lady Melton, raising her silken eyelids with surprise.

"Lady Melton, you must know, was out one day with the hounds, when her horse lamed itself by stepping on a stone—it came down, of course; so did her ladyship. 'O what a falling off was there!' but that was not the worst—she was obliged to ride home on a postboy's hack, an animal whose ribs stuck out and back-bone stuck up like the quills on a porcupine; and when they got to the toll-gate the keeper wouldn't take any money."

"The deuce he wouldn't!" said the hunting gentleman, who had approached their group with Aspasia, "he must have been wall-eyed, or wrong in his head, d——e!"

"No! he pointed to the table of charges, and said it was threepence for a '*horse*,' but that her ladyship's Rozinante was *not a horse*, it was only a spider on stilts."

"That tale is not true, I am sure," said Aspasia—"you plead innocent, of course, Lady Melton?"

"Not guilty, upon my honour," answered her ladyship; "but what a beautiful scent you have, Aspasia—is it atter of roses?"

"No, the odour of sanctity," said Greville, who delighted in teasing the Blue; and before she could reply, or even reprove him with

a toss of her scornful head, he had made his escape.

The groups engaged in conversation were now broken up by a *contre-danse*, and Greville moved away towards the other end of the hall, which opened through a conservatory to the lawn. It was past midnight, so that the assembled guests were by this time pretty well mingled, and the rigid coldness always pervading English society had yielded to that degree of thaw which the dance just proposed invariably tends to heighten. Here and there very promising flirtations were evidently in bud; the gentlemen whispered and ladies blushed; the gentlemen quizzed their neighbours, and ladies laughed until their scented ringlets literally danced with merriment. Then the music burst forth—no sentimental wire-drawn measures, but gladsome trilling sounds that made the heart leap. The country gentlemen bounded through the dance, the women glided through it; the mayor rolled through it with about as much grace as a hogshead of sugar, and his lady tumbled through it top-heavily, in mortal fear lest the bird of paradise in her turban should wing its way from her false hair. And while the fair girls glanced

in meteoric beauty along the hall, and their sweet voices gushed from time to time into harmonious glee, and a thousand perfumes were wafted on the air, and as many lustres shed splendour upon the revellers—the old ancestral portraits frowned from their oaken panelling, as if in warning of some sorrow they sought to tell, but could not.

From this busy scene of life and light Greville passed to the conservatory. Throwing open the large bay window, he descended the stairs which led to the grounds, and leant against the trellised wall, drinking in the cool air as it sighed through the trees and round the gray old building. If festivity reigned noisily within, Nature ruled tranquilly without. The slumbering deer had spread their graceful limbs to rest, the impenetrable oaks and aspiring pines slept in their bath of moonlight; and the birds were hushed, all save the owl, which hooted forth at intervals its melancholy cry. Under the influence of that solemn stillness, Greville was relapsing into a contemplative mood, when the sound of voices rose near him, and the speakers themselves soon after approached his resting-place.

“Any answer, your Honour?” asked the

first, who stood hat in hand, tapping his boots from time to time with his riding-whip.

The listener whom he addressed made no reply, but stedfastly perused a letter which he held in his hand. After a pause, he folded it leisurely, and swept his fingers thoughtfully over his uncovered brow with an air of deep abstraction.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the messenger again, "but master said I wasn't on no account to go back without a answer; he was in a uncommon taking to be sure, never see him so rabid!"

"Is his illness serious, think you?" inquired the other, without altering his position or raising his head.

"Only the gout, sir; but he *did* go on dreadful until this letter come by hexpress, and then he grew calm as a hinfant, and sent me with it to your Honour."

"If the mountain will not go to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain," said the second speaker, in a tone which seemed to falter even while it trifled thus lightly; and in uttering the words he turned towards the moonlight, revealing the features of Mr. Jer-ningham. "To-morrow and the next day I

shall be engaged," he continued ; " but the third day from this will be hunting morning ; yes, I can escape without remark—I will ride over to him then."

The servant bowed low, and departed with his message. But Mr. Jerningham ! Was it the pale moon that lit his open countenance with such a spectral pallor ? Again he raised his hand, and swept the wreathed hair from his forehead, passing slowly and pressing heavily that unquiet seat of thought with the anxiety of one who would banish reflection. Greville turned away, he knew not why, and re-entered the saloon. Something of uneasiness crept over him which he could not define.

No pause, however, in the tide of pleasure which flowed within. Advancing onward like a sea that smiles in sunlight, its merry waves rushed through the breasts of the assembled guests, overleaping the narrow confines of prejudice, and burying restraint within its depths. The *contre-danse* was finished, and before its excitement had died away, supper was announced. Then the whole party filed away to the lawn, where an enormous tent had been spread, and stately viands and costly wines invited the appetites of the most jaded to

partake refreshment Hiccup was there, ministering to their wants; and once he put his head within the canvas folds, looking like a bottle of fine old port, so crusted with cobwebs from the cellar, that his full-moon face was well nigh eclipsed.

There was the usual coquetry which the ladies never failed to exhibit on such occasions with regard to their particular seats, as much ceremony being observed as if they were settling down for life instead of a supper. At last, however, the congenial minds were shaken into proximity, and if stray mothers happened to be so near as to endanger the progress of a flirtation, the young people avoided detection by looking straight forward, and talking into their plates—a method we can recommend to all lovers in like predicament. With these provisional arrangements the merriment was in no danger of flagging, and the clatter of knives and forks, and the buzz of many speakers, and the explosion of champagne corks, and the wit that followed the draughts of that last-named creamy nectar, produced great results in a very small period of time. So marked, indeed, became the gallantry of the great hunting man among the rest, that Aspasia began to think

he was likely to propose, and encouraged him accordingly, lest he should fall asleep and forget it.

Nor did the enthusiasm pause when another visitor was introduced with great ceremony and state, in the person of the young heir. Before any one knew whence he had sprung, he lay in his mother's lap, with his little body inhumed in very long clothes, and his fair head surrounded like a halo with a perfect wilderness of feathers. Not at all sleepy, either; but bending his blue eyes boldly upon the assembled guests, and bursting every now and then into spasmodic exhibitions of glee, expressive of his unqualified approbation of everything before him. Having been beguiled into somnolency during the whole day by way of recompensing nature for such wear and tear at night, he now wore quite a rakish air, and seemed ready for any amount of dissipation. So the ladies must have thought, for they kissed him hungrily, taking care at the same time that the men should witness their devotion, in order that their flinty breasts might, if penetrable, become envious of such graceful caresses.

When supper had concluded, dancing began

again in the ball-room, and was pursued with a kind of desperate spirit, inasmuch as the chaperones and mammas evinced decisive symptoms of fatigue. The idea of "its being time to go home" was, however, bravely combatted as long as possible; and when any carriage was announced, the young ladies appertaining to that vehiculum immediately engaged themselves two or three dances deep, and plunged into the thickest of the crowd. Deep was the ire of "the old people" on these occasions, who were compelled to remain yawning over their card-tables; and frequently did they indulge in that novel aphorism, that "young people were very different in *their* day"—a species of reproach which never *did* produce much effect, and probably never will.

All things, however, must come to an end. The rooms gradually thinned, until it was impossible to conceal that "the sport was at the best;" and so cluster by cluster the guests drove away amid the grey light of dawn, every one pausing at the hall-door, where the host and hostess were stationed, to assure them that this especial evening had been the most agreeable one of the speaker's life. In most cases this eulogium was sincere, too, forming rather

a rare occurrence in party-giving annals. The country gentlemen were happy because the vacuum in their heads had been filled with wine ; the country ladies were satisfied because their ears had been filled with flattery ; the mayor and sheriff were raised an inch or two in self-importance by having spoken to the notabilities from town ; and the wife of the former was enraptured partly because the bird of paradise had not fallen from her knot, but principally because the wife of the latter functionary had been spoilt by the development of a pimple on her *retroussé* nose. When the visitors at the Hall, therefore, made their mutual adieux for the night, it was universally agreed that the ball had been a success. With this assurance they left the brilliant apartments, which looked like cities of the dead, in their emptiness after the scene of animation they had so lately displayed, and the old mansion was resigned once more to the reign of Morpheus, and the frowning guardianship of the pictured knights.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISCOVERY.

IF the reader has followed our tale as carefully as we have endeavoured to unweave it, he will have felt—or our art has failed—that sorrow lurked in the depths of this stream of life, though pleasure floated on its surface, and that a melancholy *denouement* must herald the fall of the curtain. Ever thus indeed, albeit we note it not, the lights and the shadows are blended in our career. From the wildest farce to the deepest tragedy we hurry unconsciously; and the show is followed by the funeral train; the beggar, gaunt with famine, hustles the pampered grandee. So like is ourameleon existence to the motley dress of the fool, the anomalous hues of the one, the incongruous scenes of the other, are placed in the same startling proximity. Could some modern Asmodeus be borne invisibly through the habitations of a single town, in what strange phases

and contrarities would life appear ! Here, the fevered brow of despairing death ; there, the merry revel of hilarious wassailers ; beyond, the pale countenance of a poor author, pouring forth the treasures of his imagination for a pittance, the expenditure of which is forestalled ; and next him a man with deadly eye and purple lip, meditating the destruction of a fellow-creature. Joy and sorrow, sunshine and cloud, tread each on the kibe of the other, tempering our spirits with the feverish existence of time for the spiritual calm of eternity.

We have not sought, therefore, to make a mystery of the events that were at hand. The grains of the sand have now run out, the finger of destiny waits the stroke of the dial, and yet our butterfly loiterers at Jerningham Hall flutter in the sunbeams as tranquilly as if happiness could last for ever.

It was the morning of the hunt, and the old Hall presented a scene of the wildest excitement. Though the clock was scarcely on the verge of seven, everybody was up, every room was full of life. Servants were flying about the mansion in reply to the summonses of their respective masters, some ministering to the wants of the breakfast-room, others assisting

the gentlemen to dress, and buckling spurs on heels that were doomed to rise higher than their owners' heads before the day was over. The grooms were fastening on the saddles of the steeds, and the huntsmen were fastening with equal tenacity on the saddles of mutton and other solid substances—a field-day being by no means feasible on a basis of tea and buttered toast.

Lady Melton was up, and intended to ride too, as her scarlet habit testified. Grouse pie was before her ladyship, and madeira was beside her; from which substantial sources her glorious frame was receiving gradual fortification against the fatigues of the day. Greville had been persuaded to join the party—contrary to his usual rule of invisibility during the morning—and a splendid black mare had been placed at his disposal by their host, who now sat beside him, looking somewhat graver than usual, but that might be from want of sleep. Madame de Meranie was literally radiant with smiles at the novelty (to her) of everything connected with an English hunt, in which gladness she formed a deep contrast to her poor little husband, who had been beguiled into the costume of the chase, and stood filled with

dire dismay at the anticipation of this break-neck travail.

At length, breakfast was concluded, and the whole party started off in a body to "the meet." Lord Haverdale did not intend to ride, but he was up, notwithstanding; and his curricule-and-four—a "turn-out" of matchless beauty—awaited Mrs. Jerningham and the Frenchwoman. As to Greville, Lady Melton pounced upon *him*. Admiration of his black mare formed her excuse for constituting the owner her cavalier during the day; whereat Aspasia Gordon tossed her head, and hinted—perhaps with some degree of truth—that the rider was metal more attractive to her ladyship.

There was a great deal of laughter and confidential chit-chat on the road. The men looked so attractive in their hunting scarlet, and paid so many compliments, which the ladies had to smile away with feminine tact, that the merriment was unceasing. The bright air, too, was crisp and invigorating; the birds joined in a chorus of a thousand songs; the hedges—those picturesque adjuncts to scenery, never met with save in England—shone with their flashing diamonds of dew, like the gar-

dens in the Arabian tale, where every tree was loaded with precious stones. "Bright as at creation's dawn shone the unwithered countenance of the world."*

A ride of three short miles brought their party to the smooth, level heath which had been fixed upon for the "meet." Numerous gentlemen had already arrived; and their carriages were soon surrounded by the friends of Mr. Jerningham, who engaged the ladies in a rapid fire of conversation.

At last, the order was given to break cover; the whining hounds were unleashed; the huntsmen mounted, and waved their adieux. Away went horses, hounds, and country gentlemen, with Lady Melton in the midst, and Greville by her side—the two latter at such headlong speed, that they soon began to head the field. The ladies who had been left behind watched the huntsmen as long as they were distinguishable; and then, after driving round the heath, dispersed in various directions about the beautiful neighbouring country.

To return to the hunting-field, whither our story follows the sportsmen. It was not long

* Goethe.

after the first burst that Mr. Jerningham began to curb the fire of his mettled courser, and linger in the rear. Several miles, however, were covered before he was entirely separated from the badly-mounted men who formed the tail of the chase. He had reasons for making his defection appear rather a fault of his horse than an effort of his own; and the thoroughbred animal he rode strove fiercely to overcome the rein, with all that wild enthusiasm which infatuates steed and rider equally. His snorting pride and veined neck, however, were bent by degrees into subjection; and the echoing hoofs had grown faint, and the horns mellow in distance, as he drew up at a common turnpike road, and left the track of his companions altogether. Urging his horse to a rapid pace, he then pursued the highway, without pausing to breathe, during a considerable time. After threading his path through two or three little hamlets, where his apparition seemed to create quite a sensation, and where children and women loitered, and brawny peasants doffed their weather-worn hats in mute respect, he drew up suddenly at a small, neat dwelling-house, and, casting the reins on the horse's

neck, leapt to the ground. His arrival had been anticipated; for a groom instantly appeared, to wait his commands. It was the same man that Greville had seen in conversation with his host on the night of the ball, three days before. He silently ushered Mr. Jerningham into an upper apartment, where an invalid lay, swathed in wrappers, upon a sofa, which was covered with papers and documentary parchment.

As soon as the servant had withdrawn, Jerningham turned the key of the door; and, flinging hastily aside his hat and hunting-whip, he sat down beside the couch. His brow was rigidly knit, and his teeth were half-clenched, giving the air of one who fortifies himself for an expected pain; while the gout-ridden sufferer—his man of business—wore no less an air of anxiety and dread. At first, their conversation partook of general remarks regarding the state of the invalid; but it was evident that these continued inquiries and replies were only the prelude to something which was at the heart of both, and which each approached with distaste.

“Any news to-day, Wrinkle?” said Jer-

ningham at last, breaking the ice with an effort; "your letter wore a sombre cast, the other day."

"It *was* gloomy, sir, I own," replied Wrinkle, whose blotting-paper face became convulsed with a thousand furrows as he spoke—"rather bad, it's true; but time, sir—time, sir—and I dare say we shall get over it—ugh!" And his countenance was twitched by a spasmodic stroke of his complaint.

"*Get over it!*" exclaimed the listener, turning upon Wrinkle. "Good heavens! you have heard nothing worse, have you?"

"It *has* taken rather an unfortunate turn," answered Wrinkle, watching the effect of his words, as if he almost anticipated personal danger when their full import passed his lips. "That letter has come this morning; but the report may be false, or premature. I believe it is; and if—if not—with a little nursing, sir, we may come round again. The continent, perhaps, for a while; and—and—"

A deadly paleness overspread Jerningham's countenance: he snatched the letter from the hand of Wrinkle, and his eye flew swift as thought through its contents. When it was finished, he sank back in his chair; his breath-

ing grew heavy and stertorous. Wrinkle feared that he was on the brink of a fit.

"Then the die is cast," muttered Jerningham; "and I am ruined!"

"No, no, sir; not absolutely so bad as that," whined Wrinkle. "As I said before—time, and retrenchment on the continent."

"Time! continent! What do you mean?" cried the former, springing from his seat, and pacing the room with agitated strides. "Can you wring from the future the wealth that lies buried in the past? will the continent support beggars? Listen!" he shouted in still louder tones. "Let me know the worst at once: is there a single chance or doubt in my favour?"

He stopped abruptly before the couch, and fixed his burning eyes upon Wrinkle, with a penetrative glare that made the steward tremble like a leaf.

"The report is not yet confirmed," he said, falteringly; "but——"

"Answer my former question!" reiterated Jerningham. "Am I lost, or safe? rich, or a beggar?"

"I must confess, sir, the affair looks bad," said Wrinkle. "Even the newspaper hints at it to-day."

"Enough!" gasped his listener, motioning him to cease speaking; "I understand. Prevaricate no longer: we must be prepared for the worst. "There is but one way," he continued, musingly, "in which it can be met—Jerningham, the old Hall, must go to the hammer."

"If you could make up your mind to *that*, sir," replied Wrinkle, "the difficulty would be overcome; but perhaps we are anticipating—"

"Tush!" exclaimed Jerningham, with deadly firmness; "you know that such hope is a lie! The Hall gone, and ten years' income, how am I to live?" he added, without heeding his hearer. "You must lend me ten thousand immediately, Wrinkle. Write me an order for the amount *now*—it is but a tithe of the wealth you have gained in *my* service."

"Really, sir," said Wrinkle, whose very hair seemed to stand on end with terror at the turn affairs had taken, "I hope all will yet be well, sir. As to the sum you name, I fear it is wholly impossible for me to manage it—quite out of my power. I have lost myself."

"Why, you slave!" said Jerningham, seizing the invalid by the collar, "dare you refuse *me*? Where would be your independence, if

you had not found food in the crumbs that fell from *my* table? Will you lend it me, or not? Answer in a syllable."

"I cannot!" murmured Wrinkle; and as he spoke, Jerningham hurled him back upon his sofa, with an execration of bitter contempt. A loud shriek of mingled pain and terror burst from the invalid, while his assailant sank into a chair once more, supine.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FATAL ERROR. — THE MURDER. — THE
FLIGHT.

DURING the progress of these events, Lord Haverdale had been busied in another direction with pursuits no less important to our narrative. Having driven Mrs. Jerningham and Madame de Meranie for a considerable distance round the adjoining country, wherever points of interest presented themselves, either in the beauty of the scenery or its association, he returned with them to the Hall, and mingled with the rest of the ladies at luncheon. Never had his apathetic lordship been more agreeable. The hostess had been charmed with his wit; and Madame de Meranie, whose eye had never humbled itself before to mortal man, met his attentions with downcast glances. They were all in despair when he announced, towards noon, that he

was about to leave them for a few hours, *on business*, and hinted a doubt as to whether he should return until the morrow. Fashionable regret, however, is not of interminable duration; so the ladies were soon immersed in letter-writing, embroidery, and other female engines directed to the destruction of time.

Not long after, a saddled horse was brought to the door; and Lord Haverdale descended from his dressing-room, apparelled for the road, with whip and spur: and an observant eye might have remarked that his light riding-cane had been exchanged for a thick, heavy whip, and that the character of his dress was altered from its accustomed air of faultless fashion to a more subdued and ordinary appearance. Leaping lightly into the saddle, he urged the horse into a canter, which speedily left the grounds of Jerningham behind. No servant attended him; but he pursued his way and his musings alone, with the fixed, straightforward glance of one who broods upon the present.

And yet—albeit wrapped in reverie—his noble brow was overspread with a gleam of satisfaction that lit its ample surface like a halo. It did not excite his manner in any

outward way—there were none of those sudden outbursts by which pleasurable sensation finds vent in youth; still, a self-hugging contentment was perceptible. It curled the corners of his lordship's mouth into a suppressed smile; it hovered about his lips; it stole furtively from his eyes in the noiseless laughter of one who foretells victory. Years seemed to have been erased from his countenance by those unwonted smiles, so bright was the lustre of their sunshine. And if that inscrutable heart could have been probed, perhaps its happiness would have been found to arise less from the anticipation of triumph than the excitement of the pursuit. Sweet beyond all imagining, to the jaded man of pleasure, was the luxury of having an object to look forward to, no matter how fleeting or unworthy. In this benignant mood, he cantered leisurely along the road, patting his steed upon the neck from time to time, and smoothing down his veined flanks with gentle caresses, until the road turned suddenly to the front of the Crooked Billet, where Hiccup was sunning his portliness—"his custom always of the afternoon."

"Hallo, there!" cried the plethoric landlord,

as Lord Haverdale drew up beside the portal ; "hallo, Hodge, you rascal, where are you lolling ? Good morning, my Lord. Allow me to hold your Lordship's stirrup. Come here, you lazy varlet," continued Hiccup, addressing a shaggy, ostler-looking fellow with his last words, and not the noble customer, before whom he bowed like a mandarin.

"You may put him up for the present," said Haverdale, dismounting from his horse, and resigning it to the ostler.

"Yes, my Lord—quite safe in *my* stables, my Lord," responded Hiccup, abasing himself once more. "Hallo, there !" he added again, to his dependant, who seemed to have recovered from a recent nap ; "don't you hear what his Lordship says—put him up. 'That fellow's worser after sleep, my Lord, than the men who was always a slumbering at Hephesus in the story-book ; he aint worthy that the sun should shine on him.'"

"Perhaps that is why his modesty keeps him asleep in the shade," replied Haverdale. "Show me an apartment."

While Hodge went off to the stables, grinning at Haverdale's repartee, Hiccup ushered the new arrival up stairs, often stopping to

express his sense of the honour which had befallen The Crooked Billet, by bending his apoplectic form into a succession of ponderous bows. This was done at some personal risk ; for the old oaken steps were slippery, and Hiccup's equilibrium grew proverbially unsteady as evening approached ; but, happily, no accident occurred in the present instance, and they entered the state-room of the inn without any tragic *denouement*.

It was the same sort of apartment that travellers always found in country hostels at that time—very long and narrow, and very low in the ceiling, with windows that rattled in their frames, as if the wind used them for castanets. Along the centre of the room was a thin slip of carpet, which had grown grey and patternless with age, and which was kept in a lively state of wave-like undulation by the stiff breeze that blew from under four or five doors. The mantel-piece was garnished with scripture devices, worked in worsted ; and a variety of pictures decked the walls, portraying great universality of taste, as they embraced almost every subject, from the chairman of the Free and Easy Club, and a series of hunting scenes, to a pictorial illustra-

tion of those favourite rural heroes—Tom Moody, and Dick Turpin, the fascinating highwayman. The rest of the furniture consisted of a long, attenuated table; a high-backed chintz sofa; a countless legion of chairs, which were ranged like schoolboys, with their backs to the wall and their legs everywhere; and, lastly, an old wooden-cased clock, that ticked with bewildering loudness, and was convulsed with dreadful throes before it struck the hour.

Hiccup was proud of that room. The Free and Easy Club met there, to enjoy convivial recreation, and tell old anecdotes, which they had told fifty times before, of the events of the war, or spin long stories, which always commenced with, "Five-and-forty year ago, sir," &c. Every market-day, moreover, the farmers held a solemn supper there, when the vicissitudes of mutton, and the ups and downs of vegetable creation, were discussed with sepulchral gravity. *Then* Hiccup's glory was full-blown—*then* Hiccup felt himself expand like the emulous frog in the fable; for *then* he filled the chair: and no one could fill it so well, said the farmers, either in jovial or physical capacity. When Hiccup, therefore, bowed Lord Haverdale into this apartment,

he felt inspired as by a scene of many triumphs, and marvelled exceedingly at the apathy which his guest displayed by turning from its splendours, and extending his form upon the sofa, with little regard to the approximation of his boots to the admired chintz.

"You may light a fire," said Haverdale; "the air feels damp here. I hope the sofa is safe—by the way, it *has* rather a clammy churchyard-moisture about it."

"There's nothing in this inn as aint safe, my Lord," replied Hiccup, confidently, "except the temper of Mrs. Hiccup;" and the speaker smiled a ghastly smile. "Fire shall be lighted immediate, my Lord. Will your honour dine?"

"Dine!" repeated Haverdale; "ah, ha! dine! No—at least, what have you?" he inquired, as the first absurdity of the idea of dining *there* yielded to the recollection that he *must* dine somewhere.

"Fowls, my Lord, and rabbits, and bacon, and, in fact, everything, my Lord," replied Hiccup, not remembering anything else which he could add to the bill of fare.

"Very well; that will do," said Haverdale. "If my servant comes, send him up." At

this juncture, a yawn cut short his conversational powers ; so he turned aside, leaving Hiccup to depart, and consult his better moiety on the subject of the victualling department.

Ordering his couch to be drawn in front of the hearth, Lord Haverdale gazed mutely upon the blazing faggots, which were speedily crackling, hissing, and glowing up and around the chimney. While he, however, was absorbed in his own reflections, the domestic Lares of the Crooked Billet were roused to unusual excitement by the arrival of a titled customer. Mrs. Hiccup blew up her husband and the fire alternately ; and her henpecked mate relieved his feelings by rushing every now and then into the stable, to stimulate Hodge, and see after his Lordship's horse. Mrs. Hiccup then glided stealthily into the henhouse, where the feathered brood had made themselves comfortable for the night ; and, faster than they could wake from their dreams, or our pen can indite, a couple of pullets were seized, their necks twisted, and their plumage scattered to the winds ; so that goodly savours began ere long to issue from the kitchen, as the spit received its various

victims to the appetite of carnal man. And, after this first flush of business had been overcome, Hiccup's face became solemn. He bared his brawny arms to the shoulder, and then, with a lantern, and "martial stalk and slow," dived into the caverns where the Spirits of the Vine took up their abode. They were dreary retreats to gaze upon, those secret haunts of Bacchus. The air was still as a charnel, the ceiling was crusted heavily with its tapestry of cobwebs; and yet choice essences, and genial, were extracted therefrom, even as a wiser power draws virtue, genius, and beauty from the dark dwellings of the poor. Loaded with many spoils of many hues, "red spirits and white, white spirits and grey," Hiccup re-appeared in upper air, and the external gloom was removed from the caskets, leaving the God of Wine in all the splendour of his pale and dark array. The landlord screwed up his face, and, shutting one eye, gazed through it with the other, tracking the filmy beeswing as it danced within its depths; and in admiration of its brilliancy, he forgot the cares of the world and the temper of Mistress Hiccup. He was wrapt in this contemplation when Lorrie entered,

and sat down coolly, as was his wont, beside the chimney-corner.

"Where's the master?" inquired the latter, after a pause.

"In *the* room," replied Hiccup"—in Number Nine, which Dobbs, the vice-chairman, calls the 'Muses;' and there's his Lordship's dinner, and here's his Lordship's tippie—aint it beautiful?" And he held up a glass of port between the light of the setting sun and Lorrie's eye.

"Seeings is believings in everything but wine," said Lorrie. "Pass the bottle, and hand me a glass."

The landlord was so taken back at the freedom of the request, that he obeyed in silence; nor did his distaste grow less when the offender, having emptied one goblet, proceeded to fill another.

"One can't have too much of a good thing, Hiccup, my boy!" said Mr. Stocks, emptying the second, and leisurely pouring out a third edition; "and this port is very fair—very—rough and rich, like the fine old English gentleman as lives in the song, and never is to be found anywhere else; but I must not stay now, so you can keep the rest aside till I come

down." With which words, that ingenuous youth mounted to the room where Lord Haverdale reposed, leaving Hiccup much amazed at the coolness—not to say impudence—which was gleaned in contact with high society.

The conversation which ensued between master and man when Lorrie reached the state-room of *The Crooked Billet*, was in that rapid interchange of brief sentences which will not bear transcription. But it was earnest on one hand and subtle on the other, as the tones of their voices told; nor was it meant to reach the ears of the tavern gossips, for when Hiccup ascended with the smoking viands, a sudden silence overshadowed the apartment of the "Muses," which conveyed the tortures of Tantalus to the inquisitive landlord. In vain did Hiccup attempt to lead out Lord Haverdale, by suggesting various adjuncts to the dinner, and dilating thereon. His listless Lordship merely answered Lorrie with a look, leaving the favoured servitor to translate his glances into words. No better fate either was experienced by Mrs. Hiccup, who, having, in bourgeois dialect, "cleaned herself," and put on a cap which she considered irresistible, then brought up the last course in person. To her,

indeed, the unconscious nobleman *did* speak, but it was only to request that she would shut the door, as the draught from half-a-dozen closets was more than sufficient ; and with this final damper to their rustic curiosity, they were compelled to depart, leaving Lord Haverdale to sip his wine in solitude.

Not a whit more communicative was Lorrie, as he sat over his dinner in the bar. He never opened his mouth save to introduce therein some savoury fragment of rabbit, or moisten the passage with plentiful potations of old ale ; and as soon as the operation was completed, he returned to his master.

We know not whether the vintage of Hiccup's cellar deserved the eulogium bestowed on it, but Lord Haverdale's wassail was deep that night ; and with every glass he quaffed, an additional lustre lit his cold blue eye—a warmer flush suffused his marble cheek. More than one empty decanter stood beside him ere he pushed the glass away, and gave his final instructions to Lorrie. The bill was brought and paid, with a liberal disregard to “change,” which in some degree made amends to Hiccup and his offended spouse for their customer's taciturnity ; and the horses,

once more saddled and pawing the cobble stones before the inn door, stood in attendance upon their owner's will. Having enveloped his form in a large military cloak of travelling fashion, and examined with studious care the primings of a pair of pocket-pistols, Lord Haverdale hastened into the saddle, as if no less anxious to pursue his present schemes than to escape the curious eyes and oppressive civilities of The Crooked Billet.

Lighted by a wan November moon, the master and man urged on their steeds in the direction of the forest, and not a sound disturbed the misty air, not a creature crossed their path, save now and then a startled fox or bird which took refuge from these unusual intruders in flight. They had done well to prop up their spirits with artificial stimulus, for there was something peculiarly mournful in the silence around, which was not unfelt by them, even excited as they were. Every one who has travelled alone at night will remember the awe which Nature's loneliness inspires. The horses' hoofs make such noise as if a dozen horsemen—viewless, yet audible—were in pursuit; and every lightning-scathed tree that rears its bare branches to the sky, is

changed by fantasy into the dim outline of some withered hag beckoning you to stay, like the weird sisters in Macbeth. Strange shadows, cast by overhanging foliage along the road, seem to react upon the mind, producing stranger shadows *there*. Memory, like a sepulchre, yawns to let forth the secrets buried within; the faces of lost friends rise up; the loved, the distant, the dead, are with you then, until you turn with an effort of the mind to scatter these dreams of the imagination.

Silent and watchful were the wanderers as they hastened on their way, spell-bound into sympathetic stillness by the solitude through which they passed, but vigilant in eye and ear for aught that might betoken danger. All was hushed, however, except at intervals, when a long, low wind swept plaintively through the wide champaign, making the branches sigh, and the lank grass bend before its presence. They reached the end of the open road, and leaping a narrow ditch, entered upon a rugged track, which wound tortuously into the recesses of the forest. Breathlessly they walked their steeds along the pathway, and the darkness caused by the meeting of the branches over-

head was suddenly relieved by a gleam of moonshine. Immediately after they advanced upon a little plain, from which the brushwood and trees had been cleared away, leaving the oasis where, as the reader may remember, the gipsies had formerly raised their encampment.

Leaping from his horse among the blackened relics of faggots and food, and portions of discarded attire which the late occupants had left behind, Lord Haverdale listened, as if to catch the sound of an approaching footstep. He was not disappointed; a slight rustling rose from a thicket near, and the muffled figure of a woman issued forth. In another instant he was beside her; and, her hood falling back, the dull glimmer of the moon revealed the features of Ayesha.

Her long raven tresses were dishevelled, her countenance was ashy pale, bringing into wild and startling contrast the darkness of her eastern eyes. The moment she recognised Lord Haverdale her whole frame trembled with emotion, and she seized his arm with her small but sunburnt hand, making at the same time a signal of caution.

“Hush!” she whispered hastily, placing

her finger on her lip, "there is danger abroad—they are on our track even while I speak—fly hence, fly at once!"

"Fly!" answered Haverdale, and a contemptuous smile curled his lip; "it was not to listen to a response like this that I came to such a place at such a time. You are excited, my own Ayesha; calm yourself, and hear me."

Once more she inclined her body in the attitude of an intense and silent listener; but all was still, save the moaning of the wind through the breathless forest.

"I tell you yet again," continued the beautiful pleader, "there is danger around us, though it is unseen: I have read it in the eye of a foe; I have seen it in the page of destiny; I have heard its voice echoing in the oppression of my heart; hasten away, I say, while the path is clear."

"Did you not fix our trysting-place yourself, Ayesha?" said Haverdale, assuming a tone of suspicion, which her agitated beauty forbade him to feel:

"I did!" she replied sadly, "and it has been discovered, I know not how. I fixed it, that you might hear my last words, and avoid

me for ever. If *your* race does not forbid our love, such alien intercourse is accursed by *mine!*”

And as she spoke, a deep reverberating sound swept past them on the breeze, like the gathering of the ocean ere it bursts into a billow upon the shore. A red glare, too, was spreading, unperceived by them, over the heavens; the steeds fretted their bits uneasily, and snuffed the heavy air with dilated nostrils.

“What matters it that our love be alien to *them?*” exclaimed Haverdale; “are you not superior to their outcast tribe?”

“Oh! no, no!” she answered, with terror in her looks; “my fate must be theirs, but for *you* there is another future; depart while escape is possible—they are near, they are upon us!”

“Hear but a word!” he cried impetuously.

“Not a word more—not a syllable!” exclaimed Ayesha, wringing her hands in apprehension; “let it suffice that I have loved you.”

“Prove your vow!” he said.

“I do!” she interposed wildly, “I *do* prove it by bidding you depart; there is death

abroad to-night—away, and leave me to my fate—hark !”

Arresting his arm, she bent forward to listen as before. Her gaze grew troubled, and again with frantic gestures she beckoned him to fly. Haverdale cast off for a moment the haughty indifference which had characterized his demeanour, and bent an attentive ear in the direction that her strained glances seemed to indicate.

No stealthy tread was audible that might have told of a lurking though unseen assassin. But while they stood hushed in expectation, the former creeping wave of sound stole above and around them—not like the advance of any human force, but pervading at once the forest glades, the enwoven trees, the unsteady air, as if a legion of invisible phantoms were sweeping by, gibbering and muttering as they passed.

Suddenly the atmosphere began to grow dense and hot, and the sky was illumined with a crimson glare that eclipsed the stars, and made the moon look like blood. The horses snorted and pricked their ears with fear, and at length plunged so violently, that Lorrie could scarcely restrain their fury. A loud

hissing arose behind them ; a cracking sound of snapping wood and flying splinters filled the portion of the forest that lay before their retreat. Then the truth flashed upon them, and Ayesha uttered a thrilling scream—the heath and the forest were on fire !

Not a moment was now to be lost. Haverdale rushed to his steed, and strove to urge it into action, but in vain. The two animals stood huddled together, literally shuddering with terror at the danger which their instinct taught them was at hand, and, as usual, stubbornly averse to move from the spot.

“ Something must be done ! ” exclaimed Haverdale. “ Come here, Stocks ; there is but one chance now—take this handkerchief, and tie up his eyes.”

“ I cannot dismount,” replied Lorrie, whose horse had begun to kick and plunge unmanageably ; “ see, my Lord, it is impossible ! ” and he rolled about in the saddle.

“ Give it *me* ! ” cried Ayesha. She took the cambric handkerchief from his hand, and hastily bandaged the eyes of Haverdale’s horse.

“ Now ! ” shouted the noble ; and he tightened the reins, seized Ayesha in his arms, and with supernatural strength leaped into the

saddle. "Follow *me*, Stocks—we must pursue *this* road, the fire is nearest in our rear."

He plied the spurs and whip, and the blindfold horse sprung forward. Guiding the reins with one hand, and clasping with the other the terrified Ayesha, whose arms clung round his neck, he galloped down the ravine, and vanished with the fleetness of a deer.

Thus deserted by his master, whose order to follow he vainly endeavoured to fulfil, Lorrie cast a single glance around before he determined what course to pursue. It was impossible to move the animal he rode; to adopt the scheme used by Haverdale was equally so, for the brute plunged so heavily that he could scarcely retain his seat. His only hope was in abandoning his horse; and with this conviction he disentangled his feet from the stirrups, and jumped headlong upon the turf. Rising unhurt to his feet, he then pursued with utmost speed a beaten track that led to the road.

By this time the air had grown scorchingly hot, and through the woody vistas Lorrie distinctly saw the flames stealing onward in their destructive mission. The peril gave him double energy; he flew along the sward, leaping over fallen branches and rugged stones;

and every roar of fire borne on the wind, or shower of splinters wafted past on the air, gave an additional impetus to his panting bosom. Nearer and nearer came the enemy, and still hotter upon his cheek were the blasts of its approaching breath; his heart laboured within his breast as if every palpitation must be the last. Nature, however, though exhausted, still held on, and he neared the road, where an open space insured his safety.

He was within a hundred*yards of the goal, when the rattle of a horse's hoofs echoed beyond, and soon after the crack of a pistol met his ear.

On, on he flew over the intervening ground; he sprung over the hedge into the broad highway. As he reached it, a dark figure stood before him, and Lorrie recognized the rugged features of Shingle. Before he could speak, the gipsy dashed the discharged pistol in his face, and disappeared in the darkness.

Overcome by the exertion of his flight, and the stunning effects of the blow, Lorrie staggered into the middle of the road, and sank down beside a blood-stained form that already lay there prostrate.

Though his senses reeled, and his eyes

swam, he made an effort to turn the lifeless corpse. He took off the hat, he lifted the face upon his knee to gaze upon the features. A harrowing fear seized him that his master had been the victim of violence. He traced with trembling vision the lineaments of the fallen ; and then uttering a stifled cry of horror, he subsided into insensibility. -

It was not the cold, cynical countenance of Lord Haverdale, but the manly visage of Mr. Jerningham that lay locked in death upon the highway !

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

TRESTLE the sexton looks very solemn, but sleek withal, as he stands in converse with Hiccup upon the morning of the funeral, and their eyes give bloated evidence of profuse libations poured to the God of Grief.

Shingle the murderer glares wildly from the raven tangles of his snake-like hair, while he steps on board a boat which is to waft him to the smuggling schooner in the offing. There is the indelible brand of Cain no less upon his brow than in his heart. The sun shines, to his distempered sight, like crimson flame ; the dew-drops couched in the lily cups seem ensanguined into globes of blood. The sea, heaving beneath him, looms darkly and drearily into utmost space, and it reminds him of the dire eternity upon which he has graven everlasting woe. Nor has his crime earned even its paltry wage. His rival—the successful

Haverdale—has escaped ; his mistress is borne away, none know whither. And so, with remorse clinging to him like a viper ever hissing in his ear, ever darting its sting into his soul, he climbs the contraband vessel's side. A sickly smile of triumph lights his cheek at the thought that he has escaped from justice—vain fool ! as if Fate were not inexorable ! Years must pass away, and more crimes tread on the heels of this, plunging him deeper and deeper into the abyss of shame, before mankind cast him from their bosom like an unhealthy thing—a creature unfit to live.

In the old Hall reigns the silence of death. No glad sunlight dances round a band of merry guests, no joyous laugh rings from pouting female lips ; the hum of voices is still. And the servants whisper in muffled tones, and tread stealthily in passing the chamber of the murdered man, as if their footsteps could ever wake *him* from his long last sleep.

But there is *one* lingering beside the dead when all else—visitors, domestics, functionaries—have deserted his darkened retreat.

With their orphaned child strained to her breast, Mrs. Jerningham hangs over the relics

of the lost. There is a stupor in her eye, and her features are locked in rigid despair, that tell more truthfully than tears how deeply the heart is cleft.

At length the watcher is disturbed. The final offices are at hand, and those lineaments on which she gazes must be shrouded by the coffin lid. Then she bends to kiss that marble cheek, which had never before met her embrace so coldly ; and their infant son kisses its father's forehead too, but shrinks back, afraid to feel it so chill and statue-like.

So, as in a dream of solemn terror, the dark scenes of the tragedy hurry to their close, and now it is all over. The county magnate lies in his family tomb beneath the chancel of that old village kirk. But yesterday, he and his brilliant guests stood there in all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of earthly wealth, to christen his child ; and now the ebon draperies that swathe the altar tell that all is in the dust—a voiceless whisper of the vanity of human wishes.

Portmanteaus have been packed, and servants fee'd, and the visitors have fled away one by one. The Miss Gordons have departed in hysterics and a light blue britschka. Lady

Melton hath sought her husband's hearth again, much to the discomfiture of Sir Harry, who rejoiced in the belief that his wife was disposed of for a space, and had arranged a sly pleasure-trip with some bachelor friends during her absence. Mr. Greville still remains—perhaps the only sincere sorrower on the occasion—but Lord Haverdale is not there. How should he be! Is not the sunshine of Ayesha's eyes more alluring than the cloudy horizon of grief? And so the butterflies depart, to seek sweets from other flowers, and for the present the scene dissolves.

CHAPTER X.

DARKNESS AND DEATH—BUT LIGHT AND
YOUTH BEYOND.

WEEKS had passed away, and a golden sunny eve had bathed the fields, and forest, and sea in its peaceful light: the wind murmured an evening tune amid the sighing branches, the breezelets played *Æolian* music upon the bosom of the deep. It was one of those hours of repose which call forth sympathies in the human heart, that make it pause in its struggle of life; and the spirit rests from its toils, and the hand from its labour, and the souls of the fainting and the fevered are reassured and soothed, and dawnings of a happier existence yet to come fall like fertile dew upon the desert heart.

“How beautiful the night is!” said a lady, propped up on her couch with pillows: “its calmness seems to have reflected tranquillity

even upon *my* mind ; but I am better to-night, much better ; if I require assistance, I can ring : go, and get some sleep yourselves."

The nurses would have remonstrated, but she waved them away with her thin white fingers, while her eyes shone forth a hectic glare that rivalled the last red tinge of the distant sunset.

"Come near me, Mr. Greville," said the invalid, motioning him towards her as she spoke.

He took a chair beside her couch, and remained silent until she gathered strength to proceed.

"I have been," she continued, in a low, strange tone—"I have been in the realm of dream, and solemn voices still linger on my ear ; and my mind is filled with visions and revelations unknown save to the dying."

Greville's countenance assumed an uneasy expression of alarm : he thought her senses were wandering.

"My dear Mrs. Jerningham," he began.

"Hush !" she exclaimed, with a hasty gesture ; "there is prophetic truth in the words of a parting spirit—falsehood is dumb beside the grave. My boy—Edward"—and she pointed

to her sleeping child ; “ his career will be one of toil and weariness ; I know it, his friends will be few and cold ; but *you—you* will be one—*you* will not desert him when I am gone !”

“ Never, my dear madam, never, while it is in my power to serve him,” replied Greville.

She pressed his hand faintly in acknowledgment, but did not look at him. Her eyes were riveted still upon the western sky, as if the words she uttered were not her own, but graven there upon the red clouds, as upon a book from which she read.

“ Lord Haverdale, too !” she added, suddenly—“ Lord Haverdale ; why is he not here ere now—surely he will not be *too late* !”

“ Too late,” echoed Greville, who believed Haverdale to be far away, “ a day or two will make no difference ; perhaps the delay is fortunate—you will be better then.”

“ Your kindness would deceive me, but it is vain,” she answered, in the same low tone. “ The secrets of the next world are unfolded to the spirit that is parting from this ; *you* cannot penetrate the veil, but it is lifted to *me*.”

“ My dear Mrs. Jerningham, these phanta-

sies will destroy you ; to deem your case hopeless is positively to render it so. Think of this, of the love you bear your child, and hope on ; live on for *him*."

" Ah ! would I *not* live for him ? But no, it cannot be ; and listen, there is the sound of carriage-wheels."

As she spoke, a travelling chariot rolled with headlong speed up the carriage-way to the portals of Jerningham Hall.

The invalid rose up unassisted on her couch, her features worked convulsively, her eyes flashed forth a lurid lustre. It was the last leap of the expiring flame, the " lightning before death."

The horses were reined in, the steps fell, and the sound of a hurried footstep followed across the hall. Immediately after, the chamber door opened, and Lord Haverdale, arrayed in deep mourning, stepped silently towards the couch.

She turned round to address him ; one hand was stretched towards him, as if to command his attention ; the wan fingers of the other pointed to the cradle of her child : her lips parted, but it was *too late*. Death arrested the words. Her arms sunk, her form

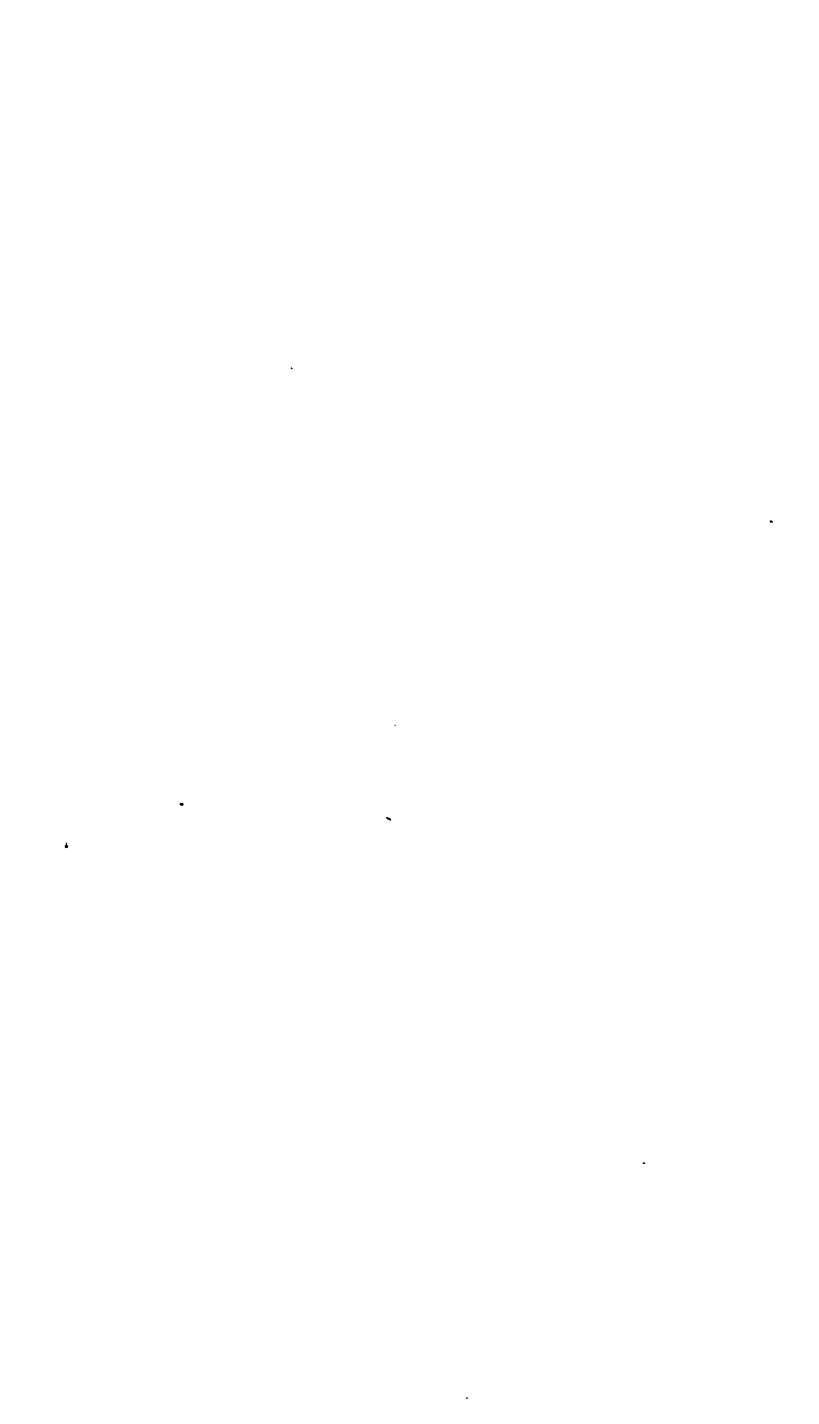
declined back upon the pillows. She was gone to that world where her heart had joined her husband long before.

“Poor lady,” said Greville, bending over her, “she has escaped many sorrows in this one pang.”

“Yes,” exclaimed Wrinkle of the blotting-paper visage, who had entered the chamber with the nurses, “it is with difficulty I have concealed the truth so long; before the end of the month the estates must come to the hammer: all gone—all gone!”

Lord Haverdale, turning away slowly, retraced his steps to the carriage. The old ancestral Hall was once more the habitation of mourning. The pictured knights frowned darkly upon the race of Jerningham!

END OF BOOK THE FIRST.



B O O K I I.

THE DAWN OF LIFE.

CHAPTER X.THE FIRST RESOLVE WHICH COLOURS A
LIFETIME.

EIGHTEEN years had passed away. It was the month of June, in 1815—a month and a year destined to be memorable for ever in the annals of mankind. The atmosphere of Europe was no longer laden with shamble-steams of blood; Promethean ambition was condemned to its rock in St. Helena: jackals and wolves had eaten the last meal of human flesh which they were destined to gloat over for many a day; and dove-eyed Peace soothed the bleeding world after its travail, as a spirit oppressed

with nightmare is lulled with sweet slumber at noon.

During this flight of time old hopes and fears have died away, and new ones have arisen. Objects pursued before with such fervent aspirations are now realized and cast aside, or forgotten as abandoned dreams. Men, too, have changed—the youth of the former epoch has become the manhood of this, what was full-blown vigour then is now decrepitude, and a new generation is galling the kibe of age, and shouting peans of joy over the Battle of Waterloo! There is a sanctity in those songs; they announce that Intellect is springing, Endymion-like, from its long repose; that Science shall awaken, that Improvement may go forth again, to cultivate and refine, and knit mankind together in a chain of holy brotherhood. All this and more may date its birth from that “leafy month of June,” which reopens our tale.

The news had vibrated like an electric shock from one end of the kingdom to the other. Every court from Fleet Ditch to St. James’s had echoed with it, every window had blazed with illuminations, joyful salvos had rent the heavens with the tale, and even the green

meadows of the country had lit up bonfires that dimmed the moon, and made the glow-worm "pale its ineffectual fire." It was a jubilee everywhere but in the classical academy of Mr. Vandersplutter.

Mr. Vandersplutter was of Dutch extraction, and had a square, unmeaning face, and a thick protuberant figure. He had been brought up to the church; but his taste for spiritual matters exhibiting itself rather in an attraction to schnaps and other strong waters, than to the ghostly lucubrations of the old fathers, he doffed the gown, and set up a select academy. The speculation flourished amazingly. He had tutors who taught everything, from the use of the globes to the language of the Hindostanese.

There was no scholar in the neighbourhood except the clergyman of the village, and *he* was an invalid; so that Mr. Vandersplutter had credit for unknown erudition. By never drinking wine when he dined out, he acquired moreover the character of a strict ascetic; and no one knew—except his wife, who put him to bed—how amply he consoled himself for abstinence from the convivial claret by devotion to the secret schnaps. Mrs. Vandersplutter,

his matrimonial moiety, was a tall, pretty Frenchwoman, slim (as are all her race), and not deficient in what is considered their natural characteristic, the *penchant* for intrigue. She had not married Mr. Vandersplutter for love, he was incapable of inspiring it ; nor for money, because he had never possessed any ; but merely to procure the freedom of a wife, in pursuit of which object a Frenchwoman can live with anybody. *Her* character, too, was white as driven snow in the estimation of that simple country neighbourhood, although certain levities on the occasion of a visit from her cousin, a young Romish priest, might have altered their opinion, only they were too dull and her husband was too tipsy to discover them.

And now in these classic groves of Academus raged a most discordant uproar, and the spirit of rebellion was abroad among the disciples. For some reason unknown, there was to be no holiday to celebrate the victory. Whether Mr. Vandersplutter's head was racked by remorse and schnaps ; whether Mrs. Vandersplutter had excited the green-eyed monster, jealousy ; or whether it was only one of those thunder-storms which sweep

periodically over the connubial horizon, was in nowise explained. But the master had banged his library door, cursing everything by his gods in direful Dutch. The mistress had taken refuge in her chamber and a French novel; not, however, without well badgering Mademoiselle la Folle, the French maid, who now sat "Mon Dieu"-ing and irrigating the hall-floor with her tears.

The agitation in the house, however, was nothing to the sedition in the play-ground. The pupils, large and small, were gathered round a tall youth, who was reading a newspaper in the centre of the group, and at every new detail of gallantry, their hip-hip-hurrahs rent the air, and shook the rafters of Vander-splutter Academy.

"And we are to have no holiday for this?" said the reader, when he had concluded; "why the very sky makes jubilee—look how blue it is, Dick Revel!"

"If they won't give us a holiday, let us take it," replied Revel—a youth of middle size and peculiar features, who never learnt anything but Shakspeare; "I say war—peace is to me a war; let rebellion show its 'horrid

front'—what say you, old boys, 'to be or not to be, that is the question'?"

"*To be!*" echoed twenty voices in reply to this motley mass of quotation.

"Then pitch the stumps again, Ned Jerningham," cried Revel, "and they may ring the school-bell till the welkin rings, we'll have our rights—'before my form I throw my warlike shield';" and he raised the cricket-bat dramatically—"lay on, Macduff; and damned be he that first cries Hold, enough!"

The wickets were pitched once more, the players assumed their positions around the field, and they were speedily immersed again in the glorious game of cricket, which no mind but that of a genuine English sportsman could possibly have invented. The air was elastic as their pliant frames, and the sky did not gleam more brightly than their indomitable spirits flushed with life and health. What elixir like youth? What intoxication like that of boyhood, quaffing rich draughts of pleasure in the spring-time of existence!

But habit is strong, and enthusiasm for the most part of brief duration. Their fresh game was scarcely begun when the booming voice

of the school-bell echoed forth its summons. For some minutes there was a pause of irresolution. Each waited for the other to make some signal either of rebellion or respect. All were silent, however; and at last one or two of the less enterprising put on their jackets, and sauntered gloomily to the academy doors. More followed, until at length the whole were wending as usual to their allotted tasks. Jerningham and Revel reluctantly followed in the rear of their fellows, like leaders whose forces have refused to obey. They paused together at the portal, and each read the heart of the other in his flashing eyes; they knew that their thoughts were the same.

“ I am getting weary of school !” said Jerningham.

“ ‘ Something too much of this !’ ” quoted Revel, in apposite confirmation of his friend’s remark—“ how much in our purse, Ned ?—I have two guineas !”

“ And I have nearly five,” replied Jerningham; “ what say you to a moonlight start for town ?—there are only twenty-seven miles between our prison and freedom !”

Revel pressed his friend’s hand convulsively; for once he was at a loss to find a

quotation. Their hearts began to knock at their bosoms, their breathing grew quick, they already felt that they were overstepping a great boundary in Life—the Rubicon that divides Youth from Manhood.

“ ‘Nay, let’s together,’ ” exclaimed Revel at last, and they passed within the gate. Their fates were fixed from that very hour!

CHAPTER XI.

A PAGE OF RETROSPECTION.

LEST the resolve of the two schoolfellows should appear more hasty than natural, it becomes necessary to retrace some of the circumstances that intervened between that period which left the infant Jerningham in his nurse's arms, to the present, when we find him a youth of eighteen at Vandersplutter Academy.

The murder of his father, and the death of his last relation in his mother, occurred in a manner so sudden and unexpected, that Lord Haverdale and Greville assumed rather than received the offices of guardianship. Unfortunately, however, the care of education was the only charge that fell to their lot, for the fortune of the young orphan was reduced to a shadow. It were long to recapitulate, and sad to tell, how the noble domains of Jerning-

ham had been frittered away on the turf and at the gaming-table. And still more strange were the conjecture how a man of kindly heart, though infirm of purpose, could have consented to involve a wife and child in his ruin. The secret lay in this very connection. It was to quench the exacting lust of play that he married; and not until he had bound himself by that tie did the full knowledge of his desperate condition dawn upon him. For a time he retrenched; but it was unavailing. Fresh liabilities presented themselves when he was least able to meet them. Then Lord Haverdale came again to the Hall, adding new temptation by the reminiscence of their old exploits, and—what can assuage the fever of a gamester save the indulgence that adds fresh fire?—he relapsed once more. Nights of excitement were followed by days of remorse. A remedy must be found to stanch the life-blood that was flowing away, and at the last ebb the fancied loophole presented itself. A speculation was at that time riding upon the stream of commercial enterprize, which, it was whispered, would cover the projectors Danaë-like with showers of gold. Multitudes were allured by the scheme; merchant princes in-

vested their thousands, and aristocrats their tens of thousands; even high-souled priesthood, that scouted mammon in the pulpit, but disdained not its treasures in the secret chest, was angling in the stream among the rest.

Advertised by his steward Wrinkle of the new scheme, Mr. Jerningham plunged into it, as a last resource. As its credit increased in the market, he dived deeper and deeper; and at length came the highest point it was destined to reach, and it wavered, tottered, tumbled headlong, rendering extrication impossible. The very same day that found Mr. Jerningham in Wrinkle's chamber, listening to the story of his own ruin, left him at night stricken dead upon the highway by the mistaken murderer—Shingle.

So young Edward Jerningham was left to the tender mercies of stranger solicitude; and dark and troubled were the waters of life whose ebb and flow wafted him through infancy to boyhood. It was happy for the lonely wanderer that he did not know *all* the ingratitude of the thankless, that the wealth of his fathers was lavished before he began to partake of its advantages, and that the doting

love of parents, too, was withdrawn like a half-remembered dream of youth, before misfortune cast a canker on its purity. He commenced life with humbler prospects, but with a not less proud ambition. The soul of his ancestry was in him, suggesting high thoughts; the fire of sorrow had tempered his spirit with the keen edge which conquers circumstance, and teaches the noble mind to "scorn delights, and live laborious days."

After leaving him at Vandersplutter Academy, with instructions that no expense was to be spared in his education, Lord Haverdale had far too much *insonciance* to trouble himself any further. Occasionally, indeed, his lordship's steward received orders to forward a hamper of game to the academy, for Master Jerningham; and not unfrequently the same satellite called, on his little dock-tailed cob, and slipt four or five guineas into the young pupil's hand, by way of "tip" from his absent guardian. But, save on one or two hurried occasions, they had never met. Years rolled on thus; and now and then, as he approached the age at which we find him, he had even addressed Lord Haverdale by letter, demanding

emancipation from a school where he had nothing further to learn, and hinting at a progress to college.

No reply was ever received to these applications; indeed, they were never forwarded. The steward had observed an uneasy disrelish in his master towards his ward; and once, when he delivered an epistle of this nature, Haverdale resented it so angrily, that there was never likely to be a repetition of the offence.

Arrived now at the vigorous youthfulness of eighteen, the reader will easily conceive that our fiery colt began to spurn the rein, and champ upon the bit, and snuff the air with longings after freedom. Was he for ever to linger in thrall, with his paces untried, and his spirit tamed to toil? On long summer-nights, he and young Revel would wander about the playground, discussing their fate, and building airy visions for the future—visions rendered, ah, how golden by their inexperienced years! At length these fancies grew into something real and palpable. What was first a mere noontide dream became gradually familiar, and at last grew into a settled desire, dormant in itself, but liable to fruition by any accident.

The event recorded in our last chapter had sprung the mine. Revel's restless spirit was too fond of adventure to falter for an instant ; and he readily agreed to club his funds with Jerningham's, and join him in his flight. They resolved to start that night ; for the moon was full, and they were uncertain of the way. Neither of them wavered, yet the very firmness of their determination made them tremble ; and when they entered the schoolroom—a spot unloved, but still grown hallowed by long association—and when they looked round on every homely feature, and thought that it was for the *last* time, their hearts laboured, their eyes moistened, and they could have wept.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FLIGHT.

NIGHT never shed a lustre more serenely blue and beautiful, whether her stars lit Italian domes or eastern minarets, than swathed the meads of England upon this eventful eve. The calmness of slumber was over all. The rivulets glided stilly in a stream of moonlight; the branches were unstirred, for their playmates, the breezes, were at rest; not a cry from the owl, not a plaint from the nightingale; but the silent air was bathed with moonlight, that fell brightly, solemnly, like the calm glance of a mind that knows no passion but the intellect.

Strange contrast to the beating hearts of the adventurers!

It wanted a few minutes of midnight, when Jerningham, whose iron camp-bed stood beside Revel's, rose up in breathless silence, and placed his hand upon the shoulder of his companion. Receiving no response, he bent over

him, and saw by the dim light that his motley friend was asleep—an indifference which bore ludicrous comparison to his own agitation. A second shake, however, recalled the slumberer from his dreams. He sat up, rubbing his eyes, and muttering, “Wake Duncan with thy knocking,” until a word from Jerningham brought him to a sense of the project they were about to realize.

With many stumbles over corners of tables and legs of chairs, they managed to complete the operation of dressing—not, however, without making much more noise than usual, as people always do who attempt any stealthy act that requires silence. The gay bachelor stealing to his couch under the paternal roof, at three in the morning, is sure to slip down stairs, and alarm the household. The rakish benedict, returned from a late dinner, who would fain slip to the side of his better half without waking her watchful heart but acid tongue, doth he not drop his boots with a loud crash, or trip over some errant pair of shoes with an explosion that ensures discovery? The present instance was not deficient in these characteristics. Jerningham had been struggling into a pair of trousers foreign to his

limbs, and Revel had got his shoes upon the wrong feet ; and various other anomalies, contingent upon dressing in twilight, had occurred to dispirit and vex them.

But at last the consummation arrived—they stood ready for the campaign, accoutred cap-à-pie. Before leaving the dormitory, each collected in a bundle a few extra portions of dress, and left a note upon his bed, containing the address to which the rest of his possessions were to be forwarded. Finally, they fastened towels round their feet, so that their iron heels might not clink upon the stair ; and, with their knapsacks slung over their backs upon a couple of hocky-sticks, and their caps drawn slouchingly over their eyes, they cast a long, wistful look round the apartment, and stepped across the threshold.

And they stepped into the pale moonlight, gleaming from a window at the end of the building. It showed them the chamber-doors of their schoolfellows, as they passed along the gallery ; and while one after another became indistinct, it seemed to their minds as if the hushed sleepers were also lost to them. All the well-known faces were mirrored in their minds ; all the merry voices sank again upon

their hearts, like a strain of music, that is no sooner born than it dies for ever. When shall they meet again, those young spirits of the dawning age? Ambition shall claim some; pleasure shall enthrall others; toil shall curb the many: but, once launched in the sea of life, few may meet again—the world is too wide for that. There are a myriad bubbles on the ocean, yet their circles do not touch.

They left the gallery behind, and, descending a short staircase, stood before the connubial chamber of the Vandersplutter and his spouse. While they stole past on tiptoe, a loud snoring from within, in the nasal key of the master, announced that he was too deeply wrapt in the lethargic slumbers of intoxication to hear their noiseless footfalls. They hastened on more swiftly, and were speedily in the darkened schoolroom. As they moved among the benches and desks, Jerningham saw a pile of his own books lying there. He placed Plato in his pocket; and in another instant Revel had opened a long ground-window looking out on the road, and they both leaped forth into the highway. A long, deep-drawn sigh escaped from their bosoms—they were free!

The spell which apprehension had cast over their minds now rolled away, and the natural glee of boyish spirits burst forth without control. They ran a little way, until they were clear of the village precincts, and then, regulating their pace to a steady march, continued on, directed by the signposts and an occasional milestone. Every now and then, some reminiscence of the past came across their memories, and they laughed in chorus till the blue sky rang again. Their path, too, led them up rising grounds, from whence they paused to gaze upon the distant landscapes; and when they descended into the valleys, there were harebells to pluck, and wild roses to gather, and every dewy flower that they passed seemed to shed double incense because they were free.

On, on they haste to the great Babel, light of step, and smooth in cheek and brow: life has not stung them yet with the knowledge which is unhappiness. Another milestone! Another mile covered, and their brave spirits do not flag; another mile nearer the goal—London! that bourne *to* which so many, like them, have wandered full of hope, but *from* which no traveller returns unscathed. Lon-

don! the chaos of all that is best and worst; the hospital of aching brows and broken hearts; the diseased body, in which vice ever festers; the mighty workshop, where the hungry and heavy-laden know nought but toil from the cradle to the grave! London! where the charlatan flaunts in cloth-of-gold, and genius dies of want; where crime conceals its shame, and sorrow its sting; where gold is the only god, and man lives years in hours, while struggling to procure offerings for its altar! London was pictured to *their* imaginations as the centre of the gay, as the city of palaces, as a throne where Pleasure sat enshrined in universal dominion. No matter—their steps are lighter for the delusion.

In the month of June, night is brief as a dream. Before they were half-way upon their journey, the stars began to wax dim, the moon waned into paleness, and a thin veil of mist crept over that cerulean sky. Then the shrill crowing of chanticleer rose from a neighbouring farm-yard, and was echoed from every hen-roost in every point of the compass. Nor was it long before the lark took up the song, and chirruped its matins at heaven's gate, and insects began to play over the streams, and

the trout to leap after them with merry splash. As it grew lighter, the branches fluttered for a moment with an awakening sigh ; a fresh chill—the coolness of a young hand—pervaded the atmosphere, and all things stirred to welcome the coming morn.

They had taken by-ways past several villages that studded their track ; but now, as the sun arose, they came to a little hamlet which their path rendered it necessary to intersect. This rustic colony consisted of a mere strip of houses running in one straggling street ; yet there was no lack of bustle, for it happened to be market-day. Carts loaded with vegetables were issuing from antique doorways ; haymakers were gathered together in groups, waiting for hire, and drinking home-brewed with the ostlers in the meantime ; and milkmaidens of ruddy cheek and nimble limb yoked on their pails, and tripped off to the meadows, singing as they went in very lightness of heart.

Jerningham and Revel were pondering at a distance how they might procure rest and provision without attracting notice, when a well-known figure approached the fence on which they had paused to reconnoitre. It was the

person of a youth scarcely older than themselves; but so emaciated with privation was the attenuated frame, so wan and withered was the vacant face, that any age might be reasonably fixed upon for his. Some shock had upset his reason; and poor Daft Jem, as he was called, wandered on day after day none knew whither, supported none knew how. They hailed him when he came near; and the wanderer stopped at their call, with the harmless simplicity which made his madness so pitiable.

“Good morning, Jem,” said Jerningham; “you’re up in the morning early.”

“No earlier than I always is,” replied Jem; “people whose beds is the ground or the barn-floor don’t make too much of ’em. I slept in Farmer Gunning’s yard last night; and very soft, too, if it warn’t for the vermin; but the rats was up afore I was.”

“Never mind, Jem,” said Revel; “better men than you have *ratted* it before now—ministers, to wit.”

“Anan!” sighed the wanderer, sadly. “I don’t understand them guns they’ve been firing,” he continued—“they say it’s for joy ’cause of the great battle; and only t’other

day they fired guns over the grave of the corporal as died here of his *wounds*, and it was for grief then ; so I asked if joy and grief was the same, and they called me daft."

"They were fools to say so," exclaimed Jerningham ; and it was a curious study for his brooding mind to see the fabled Satyr, who turned the traveller from his hearth for blowing hot and cold with the same mouth, impersonated in poor daft Jem.

"At all events, you're sensible enough for *us*," interposed Revel ; "so here's money now—go to the tavern for some breakfast, and we'll all sit down together. Where's the quietest place, Jem?"

"Here in the country," answered Jem, with a look of momentary shrewdness ; "the best place of a mornin' is the doorway of the church just below, 'cause there are seats in the porch ; but in Lunnun—"

"Do *you* know London?" said Jerningham, with some surprise and interest.

"Aye, aye, no one better," he replied ; "it's only eight mile from here. When I went first, I used to sleep under the dry arches of Lunnun Bridge ; but I larnt better than that, and now I sleeps in front of the bakers' shops,

'cause they bakes at night, and their fires keeps the pavement warm. I was taught that by looking where the dogs went; these brute creatures may sometimes teach the best on us. There's the gate as leads to the church."

Saying which, Daft Jem hurried off to the tavern close by; and they sauntered down the path he had pointed out. Before they reached the village kirk, Jem was there with a basket of good substantial comestibles. Pulling out a clean white napkin, which he had borrowed in honour of the occasion, as breakfasts were not his lot every day, he spread out knives and forks, and cold meat and bread, not forgetting a stone bottle of chesnut-coloured ale. So the adventurers, soiled with dust, and weary with travel, sat down beside Daft Jem in the old church-porch; and the morning sunlight fell on them soothingly, and the flask passed from hand to hand without restraint. Perhaps it might be an harmonious influence from the ivied walls or the tombs decked with trailing roses; perhaps it was the possession of freedom, so sweet to eagle-spirited youth; but that simple meal was a pleasure they had never tasted before, and, like all *real* happiness, it was not noisy, but serene.

By the time the homely cheer had satisfied their appetites, a drowsiness stole over them ; and, in spite of their desire to proceed, exhaustion now began to tell upon their uninured frames. Daft Jem, too, grew restless, as was his wont when neither talking nor eating. They gathered the relics of the repast together, and put them into his wallet, adding a small memento from their limited funds. He started off again, with a rude but fervent benediction—the benediction of a mind unaccustomed to kindness ; and when he was out of sight, they sauntered into the church.

That temple—you may see it now, reader, on the southern side of the silver Thames—was a relic of the middle age, built long before the innovations of modern art. What with protruding buttresses and massive pillars, there was scarcely a point from which the pulpit was visible, which, indeed, was less important than it would seem ; for half the grey old churchgoers were blind with age. Still, the square, high-backed pews looked very snug and reverend ; the birds built nests in the windows, and sweet-briar, peeping through the panes, filled the air with woodland perfume. The sexton, a meek-eyed man, with hair silvered

by seventy winters, moved away through the churchyard as our adventurers entered, so they were left in the chancel alone. At the end of the aisle, they found a larger pew than ordinary, shut in with scarlet curtains, where some village lord offered up his orisons. In a niche above it was an escutcheon, marked in one quarter with the red cross, telling of an ancestor fallen in crusade upon the fields of Palestine.

They glided in here, and, closing the door, stretched their limbs along the well-stuffed seats. And no fugitive, finding refuge in holy sanctuary, ever felt repose more grateful. Their slumber was profound as that of the village forefathers who slept in the mossy tombs of the churchyard, as unwarlike and untroubled as the rest of the crusader whose name was recorded over their heads, but whose bones had long since blanched and withered under the battlements of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ORPHAN AND THE FOUNDLING.

It was noon before the weary sleepers woke almost simultaneously from their refreshing slumbers. The bell in the turret was tolling two; the church was silent and deserted as when they entered at early dawn.

They shouldered their knapsacks again, revived in spirits and strengthened in limb; and, having waved a grateful adieu to their resting-place, to which they vowed to make a pilgrimage at some future time, they set forth upon the remainder of their journey.

The sun was shining now, and light clouds were skimming along the sky, and lighter breezes were playing fitfully. It was a sweet summer day, that gave wings to their feet, and made their bosoms lightsome. As every step brought them nearer town, they began to start projects of life, and weigh them with a shrewd, half-boyish gravity.

“ ‘The play’s the thing’ for me,” said Revel. “Don’t you remember what a hit I made when we fee’d the strolling manager with a couple of guineas to let me act one night at Pepperton? Even the Vandersplutter sat grinning in the boxes, and never recognized me—I was made up so well. Anything will do—from tragedy to farce, from the Ghost in Hamlet to the walking gentleman in a sentimental comedy.”

“Well,” replied Jerningham, merrily, “take care the walking gentleman does not extend his peregrinations into the King’s Bench!”

“You think that my ‘occupation,’ like Othello’s, may soon be ‘gone,’ ” said Revel; “but I am prepared for an initiatory struggle. The phantom of Hamlet’s father, you know, would not ‘*answer*’ at first.”

“All success to you!” responded his friend. “May you never find that ‘the time is *out of joint*’ when you look in the larder!”

“Amen! and for yourself, Ned, I suppose you have laid out a pen-and-ink existence; and we shall be flooded by novels in marble covers, replete with ‘thick-coming fancies to keep us from our rest.’ I shall never forget the tale of ‘thrilling interest’ you wrote in the *Pepper-*

ton Gazette, and the agonies you suffered upon discovering that everybody was killed, and that nobody was left to rescue the knight from the tyrant's castle, in order that he might marry the heroine."

" 'No more o' that, Hal, an thou lovest me!' cried Jerningham, with a laugh; "you are full of most unsavoury similes."

Thus foreshadowing the future, or playfully recalling the past, they left the green fields behind, and entered upon those outskirts of the great city where the trading community have loved, from immemorial time, to unite the "*rus in urbe*." At first, these green retreats of meditative commerce were only visible at intervals, and, in spite of their white formal fronts, and clipt box, and pyramidal trees, still preserved something of the true rustic character. But soon such habitations became more frequent, and the occasional greenery wore a withered aspect, the foliage grew scant, the smiling sky less purely blue. Visions of tall chimneys came next, bellowing fire from their entrails, and vomiting murky smoke into the clouds. Then the houses, no longer standing apart with country independence, approximated closer and closer, until at last they

joined in an unbroken web. And the sky looked darker, and the streets looked dirtier, and the doors and windows frowned ominously from the brows of their shelving eaves. Even the very face of man changed its aspect to a more solemn cast, as they pierced into the depths of the seething capital.

They stood upon London Bridge. From the bosom of the fair Thames rose a forest of unnumbered masts, and from those masts streamed many a gallant standard—the light pennant coiling like an adder, the fair flag of England waving its broad sheet to the breeze; and the fisherman glode along in his jumping skiff; and the waterman, gaily attired, plied his wherry from shore to shore; and at helm and at oar, and from cabin and topmast-head, floated laughter and song, in rejoicing for Waterloo.

They passed on through the haunts of business, where merchant industry toileth on, toileth ever, weaving its golden web like an inexorable fate. Poor slave of mammon! and to-morrow he dies, and his place knows him not, and the hoards whereon he gloated with a lover's joy shall be scattered in a year by a prodigal nephew. The snug shopman, too,

sits behind his counter, thrifty and content. He has his visions as well. But they must not be realized yet. A few more hundreds in his chest, a few more summers sacrificed to Plutus, and he will doff the apron, and buy lands, and make much of himself. He looks in the glass. No! he is not *so* very old, after all; there is time enough yet. And in the midst of his reveries, even while he "babbles of green fields," the voice fails, the pulse is hushed for ever. But now, as the wanderers move along Chepe and Ludgate, they can trace an evanescent smile among the commercial wrinkles; and dinners at a neighbouring tavern, hidden in some stifling court, are proposed and eaten, and punch and port wine leave the traders very mellow in honour of Waterloo.

The wanderers wound their way on, wondering at the bustle, and stunned by the ceaseless uproar of hurrying multitudes. No face but wore a peculiar impress, no eye unlit by some absorbing passion, no unit of the moving mass but hastened upon a distinct pursuit. Even the lounging man of "ton" had a purpose in his leisurely tread; the "flaneur," gazing listlessly into a shop-

window, had abstraction in his mien. No more merry, sunburnt visages; no more idlers stretched in the shade of spreading trees: Thought invested the city like a pervading spirit.

Towards evening the streets became densely filled, more particularly within fashion's boundaries, where preparations were making for the night's festivity. The bay windows of the clubs teemed thick with busy members; ministers showed there unbended brows; country gentlemen laughed loudly from the Alfred; boys of noble blood chatted epigrammatically at the door of White's.

Borne along the tide wherever it listed, our young wanderers forgot their weariness: everything was attractive, because novel to them. They were walking beside the park of St. James's, marking, with a crowd of others, the frameworks trellised outside the houses for fireworks and illuminated devices, when suddenly a hum arose from the distance, a cry of "Make way!" and shouts, and vivas, and tossing hats. It approached nearer, and the crowd opened to admit the passage of a chariot magnificently appointed. "Long live the Prince!" echoed round, and the *finest gentle-*

man in Europe bowed gracefully to the people on either hand. The carriage had scarcely passed, when the mob pressed upon its rear to catch another glimpse of their favourite; and as they closed in, Jerningham saw a young girl fall under the feet of a horse belonging to one of the outriders. The fiery animal plunged violently; the mob held back, afraid. Looking up with agonized terror, the girl gave vent to one of those harrowing screams that chill the heart as if it were cleft by cold steel. An inward impulse woke Jerningham from the spell that first bound his faculties. He leaped under the horse's belly, and, seizing the girth to steady himself, drew the crouching form away with the grasp of a vice. An instant after, the thorough-bred charger had started off at full speed; and he was left standing, with the girl, faint and terror-stricken, supported in his arms.

The curiosity of the mob was soon diverted, when they found that no melodramatic injury, such as mobs crowd to gaze on, had occurred; and Jerningham, leading his charge aside from the multitude, used every effort to calm her agitation. She gradually recovered sufficiently to walk without other support than leaning

her hand upon his arm ; and he soothed her with gentle words, and wiped the tears from her cheek with the solicitude of a brother.

Unheeding the direction they took, Jerningham accompanied her along streets which she seemed to thread mechanically. She did not speak, yet her heart was full, for he felt it throbbing. Once she stopped, and looked up as if with intent to express her gratitude ; but her utterance died away, and her eyes fell again, and she walked on droopingly and silent as before. Her attire was of the humblest kind ; and her hand, though naturally small and white, had been seared with toil : but there was something in her eye of deepest violet, and features of chiselled regularity and mournful beauty, that seemed superior to her fortune. The heart of Jerningham grew more towards her with every glance ; and he felt a sensation very like disappointment when she paused before the portals of a large empty house, and indicated that it was her home.

In the same silent way, however, as hitherto, she took a large key from her pocket, and opened the door ; and the expression of her eye, rather than any uttered wish, invited him

to enter. He followed without hesitation; and they crossed the echoing hall, and mounted a wide, desolate staircase, covered with dust. Nothing could have looked more blank and drear, lit as it was by dim rays that struggled through the closed shutters, until she opened the door of an apartment on the drawing-room suite, which appeared to be the only room left for habitation. She sank into a seat; and the sunlight—for the windows were unshaded here—burst in a flood upon her raven hair. Jerningham looked round upon the splendid desolation, where gilded wall and painted ceiling contrasted so coldly with bare boards and cornices woven over with the spider's web; and the girl, in her attitude of declining loveliness, appeared like a disembodied shadow revisiting the deserted hearth of other days.

"And this is your home!" he said in a low tone, that reverberated with hollow echoes.

"Yes," she replied, motioning him to draw the other chair—there were but two—towards her own. "Yes, I live here, and my name is Marie, and I am always alone." She paused, and looked wistfully at his countenance. The frank openness of its expression appeared to re-

assure her ; for she added, " You have saved my life : will you not stay to cheer it ? I am very lonely ! "

It was now Jerningham's turn to gaze ; but he saw nothing save simplicity and gratitude : his first fleeting suspicion speedily died away.

" But your parents—where are they ? " he asked.

" I cannot tell," was her reply ; " perhaps they are dead ; and if not dead to the world, they are so to me."

" Have you then no remembrance of them ? " pursued Jerningham, strangely interested, in spite of the whisperings of sober common sense ; " at least, you have friends."

" Another time," she said, with a gesture half imploring, " I will tell you all—all I know ; not now."

She cast her bonnet on the floor beside them, and drew nearer to him.

" See," she continued, " the evening is come, and night—night—will soon be here ; and it is so sad to have no one by, when the panes rattle, and those strange noises echo on the stair. The wind stalks about like something ghostly, sighing and whistling on purpose to scare me ; then the moon bursts in

with its pale shadows, and there are steps in the hall, until I hide my face with fear, and pray for daylight."

"Pshaw, Marie!" interposed Jerningham (he had caught her name already); "these are childish fears. Nothing worse than solitude haunts the house."

"Then stay with me," she replied, caressingly. "Listen! don't you hear it now?"

Jerningham rose, and she followed behind him fearfully. He opened the door, when suddenly from every side rose the sound of hurried feet down the stairs, within the wainscoting, over their heads, and along the distant hall. Flinging open a window, he admitted a stream of light upon these spectral visitants; and they beheld a countless multitude of rats retreating in every direction, and apparently as much frightened at being disturbed as Marie had been at their phantom-like intrusion.

"These are corporeal shapes, which are not so easily exorcised," said Jerningham, shutting the door again, with a laugh. "Are you satisfied now, Marie?"

"Yes," she answered; "but you will not leave me!" And she took his hand, and sat

down at his feet once more, with an innocent freedom that forbade refusal.

As night deepened, her form, weak with confinement and privation, declined into slumber ; and he watched her repose as if she had been a sister.

Midnight was tolling forth from a thousand bells, and fires were illumining the sky, and rockets filling the air with a myriad lustres, when Jerningham suddenly started wildly to his feet. In the agitation of his strange encounter with Marie, he had forgotten that Revel was separated from him by the crowd !

And all that night, while the rats chased each other along the staircase, and the old empty house was rife with fanciful echoes and wild sounds, and while Marie slept childlike, *his* heart was rent with the deepest distress it had ever known—the loss of Revel.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Marry, this is miching mallecho, it means mischief.”

HAMLET.

ALONG one of those corrupt streets, now happily extinct, where crime was *once* fostered in its growth, and sheltered from the vigilance of the law, the tall figure of a woman might have been seen moving with that firm measured tread which denotes a relentless purpose.

Her mean attire accorded with the character of the neighbourhood she traversed, but not so her air or gait. There was something at variance between them, that gave her decayed habiliments rather the appearance of disguise. Though her manner, too, was devoid of hesitation, she did not pursue her path with the decision of one accustomed to its windings, but paused occasionally to consult a paper, and then wound on again, guided by the dim lamplight.

Yet there were scenes that might have made a bold heart shudder—evidences of guilt before which even a man, and a brave one, might have shrunk appalled. Some of the houses were closed from attic to cellar, and a faint glimmering through the shutter told that expectant watchers were within, waiting perhaps to hear the result of a burglary, or the success of some planned exploit upon the highway. Other of those looming tenements poured light from every casement; and *there* vice, stripped of all the meretricious halo with which more refined debauchery loves to veil its passions, rioted without concealment and without a blush. Here and there the gutter was filled by some herculean frame fallen prostrate in the imbecility of drunkenness; and the waters of the kennel, rife with ordure and floating offal, washed over him in their passage to the sewers. Young children, squalid with want, dwarfed with gin, hideous with the ugliness of perverted intellect, were wandering about, though it was past midnight; their converse, strewn with oaths, already betraying the pride of sin, which had been implanted by parental iniquity. Nor was woman wanting—in the light of beauty and on the crutch of

age she was there, bad as her male companions ; so true is it that woman is ever what man chooses to make her. The very air had something sympathetic in its foetid stealthy stillness, that rendered it a fitting atmosphere for such unhallowed dwellers ; it seemed dank as a grave with rottenness, heavy as a charnel breath with undisturbed corruption.

Closely veiled, but with resolute tread, that tall female figure strode along, insensible, or apparently so, to all that passed around. The end of the street she had entered was a dead wall. She consulted her paper again, and turned off down a narrow court, where the doors and windows teemed with suspicious pocket-handkerchiefs, and innumerable articles of wearing apparel. She stopped before one of these doors, and knocked three times, leaving a distinct and measured pause between each stroke.

For some time there was a dead silence ; voices that had been talking loudly within grew suddenly still, and then a window opened, and a ragged female head protruded itself, covered with loose dishevelled hair, as if the owner had risen from slumber. Only one word was interchanged, but it was sufficient,

for in a few moments the door opened, and the new arrival stole in noiselessly.

By the glimmer of a greasy rushlight, which her conductor carried in a cleft stick, they ascended a devious broken staircase. It was so constructed that one person filled the narrow passage, and there were slides in the wall intended to form barricades in connection with the banister. On each landing the deal wainscot showed false panels, to facilitate escape from the police, and also smaller traps, through which stolen goods might be conveyed away to the adjoining house. The new comer, however, passed these grim appendages without remark, or noted them with an untroubled eye. Silently as before, she entered a room pointed out by the coarse hand of the other female, and, motioning her companion away, locked herself in the strange chamber.

It was a low-roofed apartment, replete with filth and misery, possessing no other furniture than a chair of splintered cane, and a low straw pallet, on which reclined the fevered frame of a sick man.

Erect, and with an exulting smile, the woman perused the features of the sufferer. A low laugh escaped her, a self-hugging ex-

pression of contentment, while she gazed upon the tablet of a countenance, whose only inscription was unexpiated guilt.

"It *is* he!" she muttered at last, still gazing, but with folded arms and musing eye, upon his face.

"Who's there now?" moaned the invalid, in a tone half-fearful and half-fretful, "can't you let a pal alone? Is that you, Meg? I say, Meggy," and the voice whined pitifully, "come and sit by the crib, will ye? it *is* so cursed dull in this 'ere den at night."

Still the woman gazed without a whisper of reply, while the patient writhed upon his couch more uneasily than before. Drawing himself painfully round to the side on which she stood, he bent his eyes upon her in turn; but the feeble rushlight glimmered behind, throwing her form and face into shadow.

"It ain't Meg!" he said, and strange apprehensions were rapidly pictured upon his cowering face; "what are ye staring at? Is it—no—you can't be anything un'arthly: my time ain't come yet—why don't yer speak!"

"Will you answer me if I do speak?" said the woman sternly.

At the first sound of her voice his brow

grew troubled, as if he were vainly striving to recall a memory from the confused images of the past.

"Will you tell me all?" continued the woman, in her cold, cruel voice.

"I ain't got nothin' to tell," he cried, falteringly; "who says I have?"

"Then why are you here—why are you hidden—why are you dying stifled in a den like this, if not to escape the prison and the Tyburn Tree?"

"I'm *not* dying!" exclaimed the quivering wretch; "look here," and he lifted his bare arm from the straw, "there's strength left yet."

"To murder another victim?"

"Who *are* you?" shrieked the man, glaring at her with bloodshot eyes, and a forehead dripping with cold sweat. "You lie!" he cried again, "I did *not* murder him; it was a mistake. Leave me; I am not dying; I will fight you to the last, fiend that you are! if I must go to —, you shall drag me there."

He rose up in bed, with his fists clenched in delirium, and the foam oozing through his parted lips.

“ You refuse to tell the tale ? ” she said, leaving his menaces unheeded ; “ then the task shall be mine.”

He sank back exhausted upon his mattress. She proceeded :

“ Eighteen years since, in the forest of Jerningham, many a mile from hence, lived a gipsy crew ; and their queen was among the band. O ! they were a merry set ! The rivers yielded them fish, the covers gave them game ; they had the freedom and the traditions of their race, and they were happy.”

The sufferer lay silent as the grave, harrowed less by the words, though *they* were sufficient to strike him dumb, than by the half-remembered voice in which they were uttered.

“ The queen was called fair ; not a man of the band but loved her, yet she loved none. At length one of the crew discovered that her heart wandered from her own race, and that her love was given to a man of English blood—a noble ; and he vowed revenge ! Do you remember that night when the heath blazed, and the forest sighed, and the sky was as crimson as the blood that was spilt ? Do you

remember the crack of that pistol which was meant for Lord Haverdale, but which killed the lord of the manor by a fatal error?"

"There's only one person on 'arth as could know that," exclaimed the invalid; "you are the devil, or—"

"Ayesha the queen speaking to Shingle the gipsy!" added the woman.

She bent over him, and looked into his eyes; and through the lines of sorrow and age and deadly passions he read the likeness that confirmed her words.

"I know'd we had met before," said Shingle, after a lengthened pause, during which he communed with himself; "and now, as you have told me all, suppose I was to keep you here, and get you laid by the heels, or even scragged right out, what's to stop it—I *was* in your power, but now you are in *mine*."

"Fool! you dare not; if by a certain hour I am not safe and sound in a distant quarter, the police will find a packet that condemns you to the gallows, and works out my revenge. But no! no! we are necessary to each other—listen!"

In the clear low tones of a deadly hatred

she then recounted briefly the circumstances that had marked her career since she parted from the band with Lord Haverdale.

“ At last he left me,” she continued ; “ *he*, for whom I had forgotten all, forsook me for another. I knew that his love had died away, and I hated him. I knew *her*—the new companion of his shame—and I was content to be deserted ; his treatment I felt full well would be punishment enough for *her* ! ”

“ You let him off uncommon easy, to be sure,” said Shingle, with a sneering laugh ; “ that warn’t like our old pal ; your spirit was higher nor that when you lived along of us in the greenwood.”

“ No vulgar retaliation would have satisfied me,” she said ; “ and besides, there was still a link which withheld the stroke—I had a child, a daughter—.”

“ Well ! ” said Shingle, as Ayesha faltered for the first time in her recital, “ what become of her ? ”

“ She was taken from me, and to what hiding-place I could never learn. I have sought her in the prison and the palace, in the hovel and on the road, but in vain,” continued Ayesha, rising and pacing the miserable

chamber with agitated strides—"in vain ; and *that* was *his* work, and *that* has given spur to my revenge. No common fate shall hunt him down ; his own deeds, laid clear as day, must bring his proud head to the block. That hour will be sweet—I have unsheathed the knife ere now to kill him as he slept ; but the thought of *that* hour arrested my arm, and I flung the weapon away, and reclined my cheek by his, waiting until the minutes ripened to lull him to his fate."

Shingle lay a silent listener amid his loathsome straw ; the sternness of her last sentences had established in his mind the sentiment of her former supremacy.

"Do we understand each other now ?" she concluded suddenly, in her former impassive tone. "You are poor and sick, here is money ; you are in danger, I will make you secure."

"Real goold ?" exclaimed Shingle, jingling the coins she had poured beside his pillow, "real goold. I am yours, my queen ; and we'll be true to our clan as we were in the old time."

"Then remove from this execrable den with all speed, and meet me a week hence on

London Bridge at midnight: I shall have work for you, and pay—remember—*pay!*”

“ Aye! aye! my queen, I’ll be there—real goold, real goold!” And once more he chinked the accursed metal, that has brought so many human souls to infernal deeds; and the recollection of his illness and all sorrows else died away as he listened to its ring. “ I’ll be there, my queen—.”

But she was gone!

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIVER GLIDES INTO THE TROUBLED SEA.

WHO so happy as Marie, sad and forsaken no longer! The forlorn old mansion was a paradise now. If the wind sighed along its corridors, 'twas with Æolian sweetness; if the rats made holiday in the wainscot, or chased each other down the echoing stair, 'twas mirthful company for happy Marie, and she laughed at their frolics until her dark curls danced again; so glad was the lone spirit that had found a mate.

Jerningham scarcely understood the sentiment that bound him to her. It was not love: she was too young in mind and manner to give birth to it. Nor was it a lawless fancy, she was too innocent; nor the affection of a brother, *that* was too cold. He only felt that a pretty helpless child looked up to him for support amid the storms of life, clinging herself round his heart like the dependent

vine around an oak, and for the present he inquired no further.

Among the motives that had swayed him at first, there was one indeed less unselfish than the chivalric sense of protection. His purse showed no extraordinary plethora; and inexperienced as he was, the necessity of economy presented itself more and more strongly as his slender means diminished.

For several days after his arrival, he had wandered through the great city, down streets that seemed endless, amid teeming multitudes that none could count, in order to gain a knowledge of the chief thoroughfares, as well as in the vain hope of stumbling over Revel. Face after face had Jerningham studied, still believing that the next or the next might be that of his friend. More than once he had run with breathless speed after a distant passer-by, only to meet with disappointment and an insolent stare. Half broken-hearted, he had given up the pursuit at last; consoling his regret with a determined belief that fate would bring them in contact again when they least expected it, and perhaps when fortune had begun to shine upon one or both. Fortune!

The world was all before him where to choose. He had fixed upon this very morning to make the first essay—to encounter that struggle with life, which is the penalty man pays for its possession.

So Marie had trudged forth, basket in hand, looking very important and matronly, as one charged with a great trust, and she purchased their *déjeuner*, and concealed the change mysteriously like a thrifty housewife; and now she was laying out the viands upon a rickety three-legged stool in the cobwebbed drawing-room.

“There!” she said, as Jerningham entered from the apartment which he *called* his bedroom, though the *bed* consisted of a scanty blanket full of holes, and a moth-eaten military cloak, “there’s the breakfast at last. But I wasn’t lucky this morning: a woman ran up against me, and spilt some of the tea round the corner; and then the herrings, too—they’re up again, threepence each!” And Marie raised her dark eyes.

“Never mind,” replied our hero; “we *must* pay for luxuries; and when we can’t afford them any longer, we will console ourselves

with the reflection, that 'those who want little are most like the gods, who want nothing:' there's philosophy for you, Marie."

"And there's the bread-and-butter," said Marie, offering him the plate—"they cut it thinner every day."

"'The unkindest cut of all'" he murmured pensively; "but to-day shall set us going, Marie; 'my very soul's in arms to-day,' as Revel would quote if he were here: poor fellow! you *should* have known him; such a capital hand at Shakspeare."

"There she is again!" exclaimed Marie suddenly, pointing to a female who stood on the other side of the street, "that's the woman who ran after me and spilt the tea—how she stares!"

And she *did* stare, in a way that could not be mistaken, at the window by which they sat, and at them. Pressing her hand over her forehead, she turned away at last, muttering and shaking her head; and they followed her with their eyes until a turning hid her from their view.

"She seemed poor like ourselves, and more wretched," said Jerningham; "but lest I,

too, should utterly sink into the Slough of Despond, it is time to begin business."

And while he arranged his toilet, and Marie brushed his hat, as if his success in life depended upon its smoothness, the stern Ayesha strode away upon her homeward path from her interview with Shingle. Why had she looked so long and so wistfully upon the bright countenance of Marie!

Speedily forgetting their mysterious visitant, Jerningham finished the arrangement of his attire, and started down the creaking stairs upon his first essay in life—but not alone. Though Marie was bound by her tether, and dared not leave the house to accompany him, he bore in his bosom something not less cherished—a companion that had soothed his schoolboy leisure, a creation of his fecund brain, a mental child, which he loved with all the fondness of paternity. During his listless hours at Vandersplutter Academy, he had written a farce; and now retouched, revised, it was folded in the breast-pocket of his coat, and oh! how the bosom throbbed as it pressed against his heart-strings! He kept his hand upon it, lest it should escape from its asylum,

and walked forth with the air of a father carrying his first-born.

The object of his journey was to procure an interview with Greville; who might, he felt, be better trusted with the secret of his present position than the lofty Lord Haverdale. Indeed the conduct of his titled guardian, in leaving his remonstrances unheeded, had graven no agreeable sentiments in Jerningham's mind; and the doubt of finding him in town, and the still greater uncertainty regarding his probable reception, decided him even more firmly in favour of an appeal to Greville.

Not, however, in his former haunts was the brilliant writer to be discovered; not in the snug little box beside the Thames, where he had poured forth the dazzling treasures of his intellect, and entertained such pleasant little coteries of "merrie fellows" at the festive board. Misfortune had fallen upon Greville with the iron hands of the law. Thirty years since the press was still in fetters, and genius must tread very gingerly when it approached the hallowed fanes of power. So the eagle had been brought down from his eyrie, and it was in Temple Place, *within the rules* pre-

scribed by *soi-disant* justice, that Jerningham found his friend.

On being shown up, however, into his presence, he did not find his case to be as utterly deplorable as he had anticipated. The apartment was gay and elegant in its adornments; nothing was wanting, even to the extent of a profusion of exotics and flowers, to cheat the captive into oblivion of his captivity. Greville himself was sitting at a table covered with piles of letters, papers, proofs, and writing materials; and two or three printers' devils, looking very demure and dirty, were waiting before him with their paper-caps in hand. His eyes might have been a shade more thoughtful, and the dark curls more thinly scattered round the clear expansion of his head and brow; but otherwise time, while adding dignity, had reft no softer grace away, and there still played round his lips the humour that had marked his earlier day.

He gave a warm welcome to Jerningham, and laughed heartily over the evasion of the Vandersplutters, and his subsequent adventures. When the recital was concluded, our hero went on to explain his views with regard to the adoption of a literary career; and then,

and not till then, Greville assumed a more solemn tone. He urgently endeavoured to dissuade him.

“ You had better be a grocer than a *littérateur*,” said Greville; “ you will stand a better chance of dying worth a ‘ plum ! ’ ”

“ I am afraid the die is cast,” replied Jerningham.

“ Look at *me* ! ” continued Greville; “ after working a quarter of a century in the ranks of literature, I am *here*. Like myself, you may become famous and penniless. Think of the many inevitable hours of sorrow and sickness, when the mind will not ‘ do its spiriting gently,’ but must be goaded to its task with painful effort, or still more direful stimulus. A breath may disturb the equilibrium of those mental powers which form your stock-in-trade; an indigested piece of beef may lay them prostrate: no, no, my dear fellow, do not trust for your livelihood to well-turned phrases and pointed epigrams; avoid, as Hamlet says, ‘ words, words, words ! ’ ”

“ But fame and one’s country are something,” urged Jerningham.

“ Fame *is* something — something for which men have died, but which never, be-

lieve me, added a charm to life ; and as to country—.”

“ Aye, man is wedded to his country !”

“ And that is the reason man always quarrels with her,” replied Greville ; “ The harmony of wedlock is proverbial. But we *littérateurs* cannot forget that men of letters are encouraged in every state of Europe except the greatest. Even in poor stricken Italy, literature is respected ; in England, it starves !”

Greville spoke with some degree of asperity, for he was conscious of great services which ingratitude had left unrewarded. Happily, since his time, literature has found its proper patron in the People, and no longer need court the approval of rank or royalty.

Before they had proceeded further in their colloquy, the door opened, and a third party entered the *sanctum sanctorum* of the editor. He was a tall, spare man, with a dark, watchful eye, and a gait suspicious and stealthy, and a profusion of roguish corkscrew curls clustered over the shrewdest and most scampish countenance in the world. Greville introduced him to Jerningham as Mr. Michael Brent, and they saluted each other accordingly.

“ Sorry I’m so late,” he said ; “ but the fact is, there were some children playing upon the scaffolding at Drury Lane ; and as everybody seemed to think they would fall and kill themselves, I waited to write the article.”

“ No accident occurred, I hope,” exclaimed Jerningham.

“ *Unfortunately not,*” responded Mr. Michael Brent.

“ A nice heart yours must be,” thought Jerningham. Yet he misjudged him ; for Michael Brent, who got his living by miscellaneous uses of the pen, contemplated human misery, even as a doctor doth, with the eye of business. And just as your leech beholds nothing in a broken leg but the bill to be charged for setting it, so Michael Brent viewed an alarming accident in the light of so many columns, at so much a line.

When he had finished his business with the editor, Jerningham’s prospects were duly discussed. The farce having been produced, it was handed over for perusal to Michael Brent, who took great pains to make himself agreeable to our hero, and offered to show him everything that was worth seeing, and put him up to every known dodge under the sun ; and

with the intent of commencing this proceeding, he proposed taking him that evening to a *soirée* at the suburban mansion of the Baroness Flamingo, a literary lady of fashionable celebrity.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

IT was midnight upon old London Bridge, and the solemn rays of the lamps shone faintly and fitfully from its dim recesses along the gliding river below. The wayfarers were few, and they went and came with the noiseless tread of impalpable shadows ; for the howling wind bore away the sound of their footsteps upon its wings, and the flickering light only defined their forms at uncertain intervals. The streets of London always impose something like awe upon the disturber of their nocturnal solitude. Even the drunken brawler, who would hiccup forth the chorus of a bacchanalian song, feels his voice die away in gloomy echoes that revenge the profanity. And now the passers-by moved on as silently under night's mournful influence as if they were mere dark reflections of hovering clouds, or phantoms of traitor-citizens whose heads

had been impaled upon the bridge's buttresses in times of civil feud.

As the minutes flew on, these late loiterers were seen no more, and but one figure was discernible, besides the occasional watch. It was Shingle, who leaned over the parapet, listening to the rush of the flood-tide, as it whirled through the narrow arches; and ever and anon he looked restlessly around, with the impatience of one who is compelled to remain inactive while all his powers are nerved for enterprise.

He was subsiding into angry fretfulness at the delay, when the measured splash of an oar rose from the river beneath, and a boat grated against the landing-place. The dark form of a woman was visible in the prow. She scanned narrowly the outline of the bridge; and as Shingle stood upright upon the ledge, she recognized him, and made a signal, which he immediately obeyed, by descending to the water-side. She motioned him to enter, and in another instant he was borne up the stream, sitting by the side of the stern Ayesha.

"It's a dark night," said Shingle, as if he sought to relieve the oppressive gloom by the sound of a human voice.

"Dark as the doom that must fall on those we hate!" returned Ayesha, in a low tone, that was distinct to him, but inaudible to the rowers. "Are you prepared to serve me faithfully and without faltering?"

"Aye, aye—the needle as guides men along the sea shan't be truer. I can't forget the old time, my queen."

"You will have to leave England," she continued.

"Well, I shan't sorrow for that," he replied—"there aint much safety for me here; and it isn't pleasant to sleep in the softest bed, with one's head in a noose; besides, wine and woman is cheaper in forin parts."

"In France, money will gratify every wish," she answered; "so, if that is all your desire, you may rest content."

"And don't it bring no pleasure to you?" said Shingle; "if *I* was rich, I'd make much of myself, as the great folk does, and try if there wasn't happiness to be found in fine houses and broad lands. Oh, it must be rare to ride in a coach, and eat off silver, and be sarved by waiting-men in state, and then have nothin' to do but rest—one wants quiet when the blood of youth is coolin'."

"Rest!" responded Ayesha; and for the first time during their colloquy, her voice subsided into a tone of aching sadness. "There is no rest for me in this life—no, no more, no more! When *one* fever is lit in a woman's heart, it burns the frame away before it dies. There is no hell like disappointed love thirsting for revenge."

She bowed her head between her hands in an attitude of such dire despair as forbade interruption; and Shingle lolled back upon his seat, pondering over the strange prospects that the future seemed likely to reveal. So completely was Ayesha's character altered, that the sentiments of love which had once swayed him were utterly extinct. The lover, who had not hesitated to attempt the removal of a rival by murder, now looked upon his desired mistress with nothing but an interested view to his own benefit, and a kind of awe at the stern passions which time had given birth to in her bosom. There was, moreover, a craven taint in Shingle, which bowed before Ayesha's dauntless soul, as a familiar spirit might quail before the magician who commanded it. She held him securely by the two strongest bonds that can chain a coward—interest and fear.

Stoutly plied the rowers, and onward flew the boat, gliding darkly over the darker waters ; and as the wind moaned round them in funereal gusts, Ayesha slowly rose again from her declining attitude. Her agitation was brief, for it had been consuming. In her former calm tone, she proceeded to instruct him in the part he was to play ; and though she unfolded little, there was enough to rivet her listener, and convince him that, if profit were to be reaped, danger must also be incurred. She concluded by giving him a small slip of paper, which was to serve as a pass ; and before he could summon words either for remonstrance or reply, the rowers rested upon their oars, and the boat glided to a deserted landing-place in the neighbourhood of Battersea Fields.

Obediently to her direction, Shingle landed alone, and made his way through the damp grass and mud to a gloomy building that stood about a hundred yards from the river. The house—or hut, for it was little better—appeared uninhabited. The shutters were closed, the windows rattled neglectedly in their frames ; and when he knocked at the weather-worn portal, the appeal had no other

effect than waking the birds whose nests were in the chimneys and on the slanting eaves. He knocked again, and again there was no response save the flutter of the awakened swallow and owl hovering about him ominously. No glimpse of light was visible, nor could he hear the echo of any sound from within; and he was about to retreat to the boat, under the belief that a mistake had occurred, when, on casting a final glance at the impenetrable door, he was startled to find it wide open, and a rough sailor fellow standing before him on the threshold.

"What's in the wind now, mate?" exclaimed the man bluffly; "it's strange land hereaway to be wandering in, when the night's dark and the moon hid in dirty clouds. What's your business?"

"Here it is," replied Shingle—"mayhap you can read it;" and he showed him the pass provided by Ayesha. "*I* wasn't brought up a scholard myself; but them as gave it me made it all right, no question."

"Aye, aye, there are few lingoos as *I* aint got a smatterin' on; and not much credit due neither. A man ought to larn something after goin' the long voyage for thirty year and more.

Here, Seacat, lend a hand here with a light ! hallo, Seacat, ahoy !”

The roar of the seaman’s final hail was followed by the speedy appearance of a man similarly attired, who bore a dull, hazy lantern in his hand. Like the other, he showed all the characteristics of the confirmed tar—a race easily distinguishable from the amphibious animal, half landsman, half sailor, only found navigating about the coasts. As soon as this latter son of Neptune could steady himself, which was managed with some difficulty, by propping him up in a corner—much extra grog having disposed his body to lurch—the rays of the lantern were brought to bear upon the paper, and they proceeded to scrutinize it together.

“It seems all right,” said the former, “though it aint easy to read with the glim a-dancin’ about like the will-o’-the-wisps in these here cursed morasses. Just heave to, here, Seacat, while I show it to *him* !”

“Bear away !” hiccupped the other, “and I’ll keep spell. These are queer dockermments to be found in a ship’s papers ; but it’s all fair sailing and honest colours, no doubt. Yes,” concluded Seacat, sagaciously wagglng his

head, and winking his drunken eyes, "I says it's all above board—cos why? I judges men's principles by their grog: if you can trust 'em in their brandy, you may trust 'em with untold ship's pay. Now their brandy was good, so in course their colours is honest."

By the time Seacat had contrived to deliver himself of this brandy-and-watery soliloquy, the less inebriate sailor returned, and beckoned Shingle to enter. Having secured the door, he then led the way to an upper apartment, which was so sparsely lighted, that at first the various objects it contained were indistinguishable. A minute or two, however, accustomed him to the gloom; and he saw that some twenty men, principally foreign in their mien and attire, were spread about the room, conversing in groups. Their language, though he could not follow it, he knew to be French, the character of the sounds having become familiar to him during the wanderings of his involuntary exile; and the style of their beards, and their aspect generally, were familiar to him as those of a large number of malcontents then existing among our volatile neighbours.

His further observations were disturbed by a summons to present himself at the lower end

of the room ; and at length he stood before an individual, whose name was destined not long after to wake emotions of love and pity in the mind of France. He was an old man, yet older in the wear and travail of life than in years ; and he had the restless eye and furrowed cheek which denote a spirit accustomed to resolute scheming. He bent a searching gaze upon Shingle from the orbs deep-set beneath their penthouse lid.

“ You received this from Milor Haverdale,” he said, at last, glancing for a moment at the written pass.

Shingle nodded assent, as he had been instructed.

“ And do you know,” continued his questioner, in a marked Gallic accent, “ what *purpose* has brought you here ?”

“ Pretty well, but not entire,” replied Shingle ; “ howsomever, that’s nothing — I owes his lordship such a good turn as don’t make me particular ;” and he laughed a devilish laugh. “ Gratitude aint quite dead and buried yet ; and I owes *him* more than even this will pay back !”

“ The ship lies below,” said the first

speaker; and in another hour the tide will serve that bears her hence. You will be ready!"

With these brief orders, he waved him away; and Shingle was led by his former conductor to the lower part of the house. There, in the dusky hall, he found Seacat busily discussing the cognac and a pipe; and he and the other sailor were not long in following his example. The liquor was at the last ebb, and so was the sobriety of the revellers, when the arrival of half-a-dozen more men, with a couple of shallops, at the anchorage opposite the house, warned them that the time for departure had arrived. The assemblage from above filed on before, and seated themselves in the boats; the sailors took their positions beside the oars; and Seacat, wrought to perfect self-command again by the magical word "Duty," placed himself at the helm of the foremost boat.

As Shingle stepped on board, he saw Ayesha's skiff floating a little distance from them in the midway stream; and she waved her hand to him with a gesture of triumphant adieu.

At the same moment the old man, his questioner, leapt beside him ; and while the rowers obeyed his signal for departure by bending to their oars, he placed another pass in the hand of Shingle. It was signed " Paul Didier ! "

CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE, LIFE, AND LITERARY SINUOSITIES.

IN fulfilment of the promise which he had made to Jerningham, Mr. Michael Brent duly appeared at the coffee-house in Fleet-street that had been fixed upon for their rendezvous, though not until some time after the appointed hour. For the ordinary highways of town, commonly pursued by ordinary people who thought a straight line the nearest way from one point to another, were never favoured by such a genius as Michael Brent. Amongst his numerous acquaintance there were too many confiding landladies, who had loved the man of letters, "not wisely, but too well;" and deep had been their anger at finding their love and lodgings deserted, and no effects remaining to pay the score. There was many a friend whom he would rather not meet since he flattered him into the loan of five pounds ;

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and not a few notes of hand issued by this youth of promise, which, not having received the formality of payment, were handed over to officer and tipstaff by irate creditors. Thus the broad ways of London were not for Mr. Michael Brent. But, instead, he became more and more retiring in disposition, and studied the most abstruse labyrinths and impenetrable lanes; and just as there are some very profound scholars in this our land, who can write matchless Greek, but cannot spell English so well as a charity boy, so Michael Brent was utterly lost in the straightforward thoroughfares, and only at home in the most subtle mazes of byway and alley.

As good fortune, however, would have it, he reached his destination without being waylaid; and they were speedily rolling in a hackney-coach to the residence of the Baroness Flamingo. During their ride, Jerningham received from his companion a brief sketch of the lady they were about to visit, which did not exalt his opinion of literary people in general, or of the Baroness in particular. Our hero began insensibly to perceive that the world of letters was not the heaven he had supposed; that patriot writers might be bought

by tyranny at ten guineas a sheet ; that moral instructors were apt to cheat their tradesmen ; and that blue-stockings, whose pens overflowed with glowing pictures of virtue, were personally very unostentatious in their display of ethical propriety.

Their arrival put an end to these reveries ; and the aspect of a large, well-lighted mansion recalled him to a sense of the ever-vanishing present. The interior of the house was very costly, with looking-glass doors and gilded panels ; and, while splendour had done much, taste was equally evident in the *tout-ensemble*. There is a natural tact in woman which soon soars above the fetters of low origin, and teaches her what examples to adopt, if she finds herself in a higher sphere. And when Jerningham, ushered by his friend through the suite of antechambers and drawing-rooms to the grand saloon of reception, made his bow to the Baroness, she received him with an air of fashionable ease that might have imposed upon a thorough man of the world.

Her history was this : Thirty years before, in one of our little country towns was a newspaper-shop, where three sisters presided. In allusion to their unusual beauty, they were named the

Rose, the Lily, and the Violet ; and very even was the tenor of their way, until a certain regiment of hussars was ordered to this sequestered nook. An eventful day it proved for the village flowers, whose only dissipation had hitherto been to flirt slyly with the pudding-headed sons of the country gentlemen, and whose most ambitious matrimonial views extended no farther than to become the wives of farming youths who were " well to do." And a rare windfall was it for his Majesty's officers to find such solace amid the expected dulness of country quarters. Never had there been such a thirst for news in the town before. Officers were buying papers from morning till night ; and young cornets borrowed novels, which they made their servants read, so that they might glean the contents without effort, and find food for converse with the village belles. As might be anticipated, this conjunction of Venus and Mars soon produced tempest and convulsion. The Lily was the first to yield. Major Reynolds, a man with dyed whiskers and false calves, bore her away, fancying she was smitten with his personal attractions. Then young Colonel Phipps persuaded the Violet that she was not

born to blush unseen ; and the Rose, our present heroine, became the prize of Captain Girkins—a gallant officer, whose heart was as blank as his purse.

It would swell out three marble-covered volumes of modern romance, were we to attempt to follow her subsequent career—how the Rose, transported to town, discovered the power of beauty ; how the Captain, in order to retain her possession, was compelled to marry her ; how the Rose made him buy an Italian title for forty pounds ; how the Captain, ruined by his spouse, died in the King's Bench, of grief and overheating himself at racquets ; how the widowed Rose, consoling herself with her mushroom rank and advantageous *liaisons* with noble lovers, at last became the semi-fashionable editress of the *Court Echo*, and the very identical Baroness Flamingo now sitting before Edward Jerningham—all this must be omitted here, “ for want of space,” or “ out of respect to the feelings of the parties,” or lest the publisher should be prosecuted, or for any other reason that may suggest itself to the imagination of the reader. Suffice it that there was the lady, still magnificent in stature, still beautiful in that innate loveliness which

changes its character, but does not die, with age, and still surrounded by club loungers and military men, who bestowed their tediousness upon her and her *soirées*. She was in unusually good humour this evening. Some singers from the Opera were among her guests, and the party was in some respects a brilliant one.

“Et ce cher Monsieur Brent, comment se va-t-il?” said the Baroness, extending her gloved hand, which he bent over devotionally.

“Excellent well,” he replied; “too busy, my dear Baroness, to be otherwise. Permit me to introduce to you Mr. Jerningham, a recruit in the ranks of literature, and, what is better, a *protégé*, I believe, of your friend Lord Haverdale.”

“Mr. Jerningham is very welcome,” said the Baroness graciously; “and, *à propos* of Lord Haverdale, I half expect him here this evening. Pray take a seat beside me here;” and she motioned him to her ottoman. “How long have you been in town?”

“Scarcely a month,” replied Jerningham; “I am still a novice in the life of your great Babel.”

“And you have not been to the Opera yet,

I dare say," she continued ; " then I must see you in my box on Saturday. I think you will be amused."

" You are very kind, indeed," said Jerningham, who felt flattered by her politeness, and marvelled exceedingly what could be the cause.

" Now don't say a syllable about it," she added ; " but come and see me whenever you are disengaged. Wednesday is my night—hush !" and she waved away his acknowledgments with a gesture imploring silence ; " you must hear this cavatina—it is a *chef d'œuvre* of Mozart."

While one of the operatic stars of that day sang in the liquid language of Italy to the music of the great composer, Jerningham gazed round upon the assembled guests.

The scene was brilliant ; but it did not require any extraordinary acumen to detect the flaws entailed by the false position of the Baroness. Her rooms were well filled, and the men bore generally the unmistakeable impress of good breeding. There were stiff old captains, who were always lounging between Harrowgate and Bath, for the benefit of their India-scorched livers ; they talked, in groups, about chalybeate waters and other elixirs for

restoring health and youth. There were rough old club-bachelors, who spoke together in French, and imparted to each other, in confidence, their opinions regarding the dancing of a new *coryphée*; and pale, worn-out literary men loitered among the rooms; and buckram knights and country gentlemen talked politics in retired corners. Everybody seemed to have come there for some especial purpose, quite independent of the Baroness; and after the first careless greeting, few took the trouble to converse with her.

The weakest point, however, was the female department. Men will go anywhere, and *can* go anywhere without losing *caste*; but in managing her own sex the poor Baroness was sadly puzzled.

The petty devices which she used to secure a lady who happened to be her neighbour; the ludicrous subterfuges wherewith she salved her tender fame, the rebuffs she had to endure without murmuring, her joy when the prey was captured, her vexation when some unfortunate rumour caused her to be "cut" with contumely—the relation of these vicissitudes might excite laughter and tears from the same eye. It was only with the most consummate

address that she could effect a sprinkling of presentable women ; and, after all, they were of a doubtful order—intriguing widows, fortuneless misses verging on the desperation of thirty, and literary ladies who had a *parvenu*-admiration for the owner of a title and a fine house. And was it all for this? Was it to become the centre of such a motley assemblage, to own an opera box, to feast men who despised *her* and women that she despised, that the Rose forsook her rustic dwelling, and honest happiness ! Strange anomaly ! and yet stranger still that the woman of the world did not conceive her splendours dearly bought even at this sacrifice !

Some of the club-bachelors had now adjourned to the card-tables, and subsided to *écarté* and whist. Jerningham was rivetted by a lovely female face at an opposite corner of the apartment, when Michael Brent sat down quietly on the rich crimson couch beside him.

“ You are fascinated by the very serpent of the garden,” said the latter, glancing his eye to the lady on whom Jerningham gazed.

“ Is she subtle as beautiful, then ?” inquired Jerningham : “ what is her name ?”

“Hush! speak low. Miss Sophia Dawes—a name that tells not of ancestral glories—her face is her fortune, sir; and she will invest that capital as advantageously as possible.”

“And the foreigner who converses with her?”

“Is one of the slaves tied to the car of her beauty. He is not known here generally, for his name is never announced; but, *entre nous*, he is no less a person than the refugee Prince de Condé. See, he whispers, and she replies in piano: *la belle* Sophie has already her eye upon the Prince’s lands, and her heart upon his power.”

With thrilling sensations Jerningham gazed upon the representative of France’s nobility and grandeur, bearing a name that awakens a thousand recollections of the time when his country was most glorious. He was slight in frame, pale in complexion, and of middle height. The character of his features conveyed unequivocally the idea of a “*preux chevalier sans peur*,” whose spirit could know no shrinking in the tented field. There was a line, however, near the mouth, betokening the same foible that distinguished Henry the Fourth

and Louis the Fourteenth; a certain playful softness, showing a disposition subject to female rule. It may be seen in the faces of our Charles the Second, the Duke of Marlborough, and a hundred others, who have been more fond than wise. Woe to the unfortunate possessor of this characteristic! for the dullest woman will discover it by an innate instinct of her sex; and sage indeed must she be who does not make its abuse minister to her vanity. Even then the furtive eye of the beautiful Sophia read the trait in the countenance of the Prince de Condé, and she bit her vermilion lips to curb the busy thought that crowded along her face.

They rose, and he tendered his *adieux*. "Shall you ride to-morrow, *ma chère* Mademoiselle?" said the Prince, as they passed the seat where Jerningham sat.

"I scarcely know," she replied in her subdued tone, that assumed to be so confidential; "my brother cannot accompany me."

"But *I* am at your bidding," answered the gallant Prince; "may my coachman call for your orders?"

A sidelong glance from her deep, rich

eye, conveyed the affirmative. He pressed her hand, nodded slightly to the Baroness, and withdrew. The soft smile was on his lip—the smile of that love with which Fate had enwoven his doom! Fair was the scene at the rising of the curtain, sad the *dénouement* over which we shall see the veil fall at last!

Jerningham was still gazing at the vacant seat from which the Prince had vanished, when a servant whispered him that the Baroness desired a moment's conversation alone in the ante-room.

“Mr. Brent has given me such a glowing description of your talents,” said the Baroness, as our hero sat down beside her, “that I am tempted to call them into requisition.”

Jerningham, scarcely knowing what to answer, blushed slightly, and remained silent. The Baroness divined her victim at a glance: she saw that her new acquaintance was young in literary ways; so, boa constrictor-like, she covered him with the spume of flattery, as a preliminary to consuming him! A rare hand at business was Miladi Flamingo! “You have heard of the poetess L——?” she continued; “her defection from my ranks has left a gap in the staff of the *Court Echo*—very

ungrateful of her ; for my introduction was the origin of her fame : but the world *is* heartless, Mr. Jerningham. Now, if *you* would like to try your hand as a beginning at some light tale or poetry, perhaps this opportunity might be a favourable one to essay your powers : what do you think ? ”

Jerningham *thought* of the tale of thrilling interest which he once wrote in the *Pepperton Gazette*, wherein everybody being killed, no one was left to rescue the lady. Jerningham *thought* of this, and of poor Revel’s jokes upon it ; but he *said* merely that he should be only too happy to assist the Baroness in her labours of journalism.

“ Then suppose we say a tale ? ” added the editress. “ If you have nothing of the kind in contemplation, call on me to-morrow, and I will give you some amusing information from which you can draw your materials. ‘ Truth is stranger than fiction,’ you know ; *I* can tell you better things than are found in fairy-tales, and more curious dramas than even the old romancers could invent. Ah ! my Lord, this is very kind of you ! ”

Jerningham turned his head, as the Baroness extended her small hand, and recognized in

he new comer, to whom the last words were addressed, his titled guardian Lord Haverdale. Thus involved in an interview which he would willingly have avoided, Jerningham rose from his seat, and leant (as if to assure his wavering firmness) against the marble mantelpiece behind him. Would Lord Haverdale rebuke his unauthorized departure from Vandersplutter Academy? Would he embrace him as he had been embraced by his father in Jerningham Hall? Would he cut him dead, as a useless, vulgar limb of humanity—an inconvenient hanger-on upon his bounty? Jerningham believed his guardian to be capable of either conduct. Whether or not, Lord Haverdale was far too worldly-wise to hazard a scene by adopting any such course. He acknowledged the presence of his *protégé* with a salute, neither more cold nor more friendly than characterized his wonted manner. Without alluding to the circumstance of his flight, or asking any explanation of the *contretemps* that thus brought them together in the saloon of the Baroness, he merely announced to Jerningham that he was about to take advantage of the peace by leaving England for the continent, and recommended him to call at his

house in May Fair without delay, if he wished to see him before his departure.

Jerningham had no alternative but to assent; and having declined the invitation of the Baroness to prolong his stay, he paid his *adieux* and left the house with Michael Brent.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CONSPIRACY OF PAUL DIDIER—THE
FRENCHWOMAN'S LAST LOVE—AMBITION !

“ When the last hopes of trampled France had failed,
Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
From visions of Despair I rose, and scaled
The peak of an ærial promontory,
Whose caverned base with the vexed surge was
hoary ;—”

SHELLEY'S *Revolt of Islam*.

As the brook glides to the river, as the river swells to the sea, so this our wayward history leaves the fortunes of the abstract units, in order to pursue those intrigues and counter-plots of the many with which their destinies are interwoven. The brook, though it bubble so gaily, *must* merge into the stately river ; the river, though lit so gladly with youthful sunbeams, and rippled so merrily by playful winds, must steal at last into the solemn

ocean, and mingle too, alas! never to rest again. Once past the threshold of youth, once disenchanted with its innocent excitements, and then farewell, a long farewell, to halcyon content.

Has the reader forgotten Madame de Méranie—the fair Frenchwoman who graced Mr. Jerningham's board long years before? We would fain believe not. Her little snuffy husband has long been gathered to his forefathers in their showy family vault at Père la Chaise. And she, no longer young, but yet not old, still breathes forth, like a surrounding atmosphere, the same unimaginable charm that characterized her pensive, disappointed youth. Her face—how we envy the reader's power to forget what must haunt us for ever!—her face does not look thirty-eight, because in her spring-time sorrow gave it an early maturity, and such beauty wears better than the bright loveliness of the Saxon. Her rich chestnut hair has not lost a tress, nor are the deep wells of her large hazel eyes less purely lustrous. Her forehead, perhaps, is higher and more pale; and there, and there only, could an observer detect the evidences of any inward change. A yearning for sympathy and

love had been her dream before: she had found that love, or the shadow that resembled it, since then; and the supremacy of the intellect followed. Ambition was her idol now.

The Peace, that brought Louis the Eighteenth to the Tuileries, reinstated Madame de Méranie in her hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain. Her fortune, although impaired, sufficed to keep up her establishment in much of its old *éclat*. The graceful ease of French society forbids the absurdity of vulgar ostentation; and the *soirées* of Madame de Méranie still attracted the haughty relics of the old *régime*, no less than the scheming spirits and the established wits of the new-born world.

Prejudiced as she was, however, with the *prestige* of her rank and *caste* in favour of the reigning king, her keen intelligence soon penetrated his capabilities, and saw the truth of the furtive pasquinades which ever and anon floated from mouth to mouth in illustration of his imbecility. The feeble harmlessness of Louis was more distasteful to her than more positive faults might have been; the former only excited her contempt, the latter would have armed the pride of partisanship. The littleness of his literary taste; the plebeian love

of scandal, as eager as that of Madame Eau-sucrée, the grocer's wife, about her next-door neighbour the little *coryphée*; the voracity which could swallow the flattery of Monsieur Decazes, his minister, in such fulsome doses—these soon turned her trustful admiration into scorn. She was looking round for other objects in whom to centre her hopes of seeing royalty revived in its pristine splendour, when a new vision revealed itself—a plot, it is true, of the disappointed and fevered spirits of the hour; but one to change the branch of the regal line, not to resuscitate the Revolution.

The *salon* of Madame de Méranie was illumined, as usual, for reception. The young and the fair lounged thither from theatre and ball, and threw around their firework coruscations of playful converse. The last new work was criticised, and the author arrived and received the praises of his admirers. The late opera was canvassed, and a young lion of the moment made the fortune of the composer by persuading Pasta of the queenly brow to sing a favourite air from it, at the piano. And when the great operatic goddess waved her *adieux*, other voices, more humble but still sweet, poured forth the graceful songs of Beranger,

until every whisper was hushed into silence by their touching truthfulness. And these passed away, and other visitors came ; but among the last were men of a different stamp. There was less of the listless *flaneur*, and more of the bloodshot eye and marble cheek, denoting mental inquietude. Fouché stole through the gilded rooms with his mysterious mien and cat-like stealthiness of step. Talleyrand, who had already put his signature to a dozen constitutions—each in its turn warranted to last for ever, was using the gift of speech to *conceal* his real thoughts, and no whit less imperturbable because he had lost the ministerial *portefeuille*. He resigned himself to Providence and the hope of a thirteenth constitution.

But seated with Madame de Méranie apart was a man of withered frame and colourless countenance, whose furrows seemed to have been seared by the desolation of a thousand griefs. It was the stranger to whom Shingle had been sent by Ayesha, the doomed Paul Didier. Before them, in elegant confusion, was a heap of music ; merry vintage-songs and laughing lays of love, and a couple of guitars, composed the *mélange*, forming a curious contrast to the musing solemnity of the speakers.

"Have you weighed the chances *cautiously*?" asked Madame de Méranie. "I know you have weighed them wisely."

"Let the tocsin of Liberty but sound, and our compatriots will rise as they have ever risen before," responded Paul Didier. "Grenoble and Lyons are already ripe for the harvest, and all through the south the seed is deeply sown; ere long," and his voice died away to a whisper almost inaudible, "the throne of France shall be as empty as the urn that once held the ashes of Charlemagne."

"And the successor to its glory must not be known until we place him in the seat of power?" continued the Frenchwoman in the half-inquiring tone of doubt.

"To declare that would alienate many partisans," he replied. "We must strike down the false image before we set up the new."

"It is well!" said Madame de Méranie, curling her beautiful lip with aristocratic pride; "the multitude fight for *change* merely, while the old chivalry fights for honour; great thoughts are not for the *canaille*."

"The priest must be led to dream of a reign where the *bâton* of royalty may be wielded by a later Richelieu or a craftier Mazarin; the

republican must be amused with a vision of imperial eagles borne on our banners over every land, and Napoleon recalled to go forth again conquering and to conquer: only to a chosen few of the royalists despising the present yoke may it be known that the oriflamme of France is to be unfolded in the cause of—.”

The approach of a servant prevented the conclusion of the sentence. A messenger waited outside with a letter from England. Madame de Méranie, who sat near the door, stepped across the staircase to the entrance of her boudoir, and a *billet* was placed in her hand by Shingle. She glanced hastily at the handwriting and at the coronetted seal, while her face lit up with pleasure.

“ You come direct from Milord—he is well ? ” she asked hurriedly in English.

“ Aye, aye, well enough, my lady, for the matter of that,” answered Shingle, making a rough attempt at a bow.

“ You are fatigued—descend and refresh yourself,” she continued, without observing Shingle’s manner. “ Léonide, see that Monsieur is attended to.”

Shingle, scraping himself out, followed the pert, dark-eyed little *femme-de-chambre* below.

Madame de Méranie returned to the side of Paul Didier ; but he had become *distrain*, and soon afterwards departed.

No sooner was he gone than she hurried again to her boudoir, and drawing the letter from her bosom, perused it with eager haste.

Those liquid hazel eyes grew brighter and yet more soft, for the lines spoke as much of *love* as of ambition, and the writer was the only man for whom her heart had ever beaten with a quickened pulse.

“ Haverdale coming to Paris again ! ” she murmured as she sunk into reverie with her hands clasped upon her bosom.

And the fever of ambition was soon forgotten in the dream of love.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE UNEXPECTED MEETING.

“ The play’s the thing.”

HAMLET.

“ CHEER up, Jerningham, my boy ! ” said Michael Brent ; “ your face is as long as a Chancery suit. A literary man must have the bravery of a lion, the endurance of a lamb ; like the English at Waterloo, he must never know when he is beaten.”

It was a trying night for Edward Jerningham. Through the instrumentality of Greville and Michael Brent, his farce had been read and accepted, and this was the eventful eve fixed upon for its production. As he wandered about the streets on the morning of that day, its announcement on the playbills haunted him at every turn. He stopped once or twice

to read the list of actors' names appended to the characters; for he had declined appearing at rehearsal, and the ever-useful Michael had undertaken the task; but if any stray passenger stopped too, or regarded him with a passing glance, he fancied himself recognized as the author, and hurried away, blushing guiltily.

And now Jerningham sat in his own lodgings, endeavouring to gather consolation from the converse of Michael Brent, while Michael Brent fed the stream of his eloquence with tributary rivulets of brandy-and-water. A great many causes had combined to dispirit the neophyte in literary ways. The great comic actor of the house had thrown up his part at the last moment, and to ensure his perfect inability to appear, was now getting *Bacchi plenus* with all possible celerity under the Piazzis in Covent Garden. Some new man had undertaken the *rôle*; and Jerningham shivered at the idea of all his crack hits being consigned to the tender mercies of a raw country barn-player. His nervous irritation lent a scowl to every face he met, and made the mizzling muddy weather more dull and suicidal. He was in doubt whether to drown his intellects

in the beverage which he had placed before his friend, or suspend his frame and his sorrows by a rope from the bed-post. It struck six. He filled his glass, and tossed it off.

Jerningham sat in his own lodgings, but not in the old house, with its cobwebbed gilding and echoing stairs—not with the simple, pretty Marie for his housewife. Lord Haverdale, after the meeting which followed their rencontre at the Baroness Flamingo's, had settled upon his ward a trifling allowance, which, though beggarly enough in itself, was sufficient to raise Jerningham above positive want. And as time passed on, and it became necessary to make known his "whereabouts" to the members of his miscellaneous acquaintance, the equivocal character of his position in such an asylum as the empty mansion rendered manifest the necessity for a change. So he sought rooms in a street near Westminster, very cheap, and very high up in the house, and very low in the ceiling; and there he dwelt—in all the pride of literature it is true, but without much "pomp or circumstance" in point of furniture. His back window commanded the view of a wilderness of chimneys

and tiles ; his front window looked over the way, and no farther, for the opposite houses had a story more than those on his side of the way. On the right side of his retreat dwelt the wife of a waterman, who had no end of children ; and many and various were the shrieks in treble which issued from these olive branches, who had always lungs of appalling healthfulness and vigour. On the left hand, an Irish lady, who took in washing, led an amphibious kind of life. The atmosphere near old Father Thames is always somewhat humid, not to mention the malaria arising from pollutions which empty themselves therein ; and litters of superfluous kittens cast there to perish before their eyes are ever opened to the business of life ; and overfed apoplectic spaniels, thrown there during the dog-days ; and love-sick housemaids, who drown themselves then and there, upon moonlight nights, because James the groom or Mr. Bilberry the grocer has been unkind. The airs of Thamesis are never exactly so aromatic as those of " Araby the Blest ;" but their mist was clear, and their odours were a choice perfume, compared with the fog and the foulness of the Irish lady's washing establishment. None of

her starch seemed to stiffen her own caps, they hung despondently and limp as her curls; and her arms, with frequent vicissitudes of alternate heat and cold, were always chapped in winter and swollen in summer-time.

Many an hour Jerningham sat biting his pen, in the agonies of composition, and gazing upon the shirts and petticoats, and bibs and tuckers and frills, which that lady extended from her window upon a pole to dry; and sadly he inhaled the scent of soapsuds and soda, and followed the reeking vapours of her cauldron with his eyes as they rose all heavily to upper air.

But he had been busy of late. Upon visiting the Baroness a few mornings after his first introduction, the scheme of the Tale had been entered into and arranged. Much as Jerningham had been prepared by Michael Brent's imperfect outline of her life for the exhibition of an intellect peculiarly organized, the conversation of the Baroness, when uninterrupted by visitors, was doubly strange and enthralling. The stories she told him of *Life*, sometimes ludicrous, often tragic, but invariably startling, gave him an insight into the penetralia of society which riveted his imagina-

tion irresistibly, and lifted a veil that is seldom pierced even by those who have lived the allotted three-score years and ten. She possessed the true art of the *raconteuse*. Without daring to *ask* whether she had really witnessed all the scenes that she so vividly described, Jerningham *felt* that nothing short of personal experience could have given such a profound initiation into the byways of knowledge. No matter who was mentioned, she was equally at home. From the noble warrior who had fought England's last great battle to the young duke who might (she said) one day by revolution or right fill the throne of France, the Baroness Flamingo allowed none to escape. She had met them all "*somewhere*," and had a story to tell in connection with each.

When Jerningham left her villa, he looked upon the whole world around him with a different eye. The delicate refined romance of youth, that paints all things *couleur de rose*, and makes love above everything, a rainbow of nought but the bright and beautiful, was fled—gone for ever. But the more exciting side of human passions, the thrilling melodrama of the French stage, the intrigue and the counter-plot, the hate that hates till death, the love

that possesses its object or perishes, the romances which our writers breathed into the age of chivalry, deeming their fancies too exaggerated for the present working-day world, were here limned before his mental gaze as pictures of events that had passed around him during his entire existence, and were moving before him then.

No wonder that Jerningham hurried home to his humble lodging, and, in spite of the waterman's twins on the right-hand side, and the Irish lady's soapy aroma on the left, that he struck off the first chapter of his tale with the rapid flight of a young eagle that has just felt its wings. And easily will the reader conceive, if he has ever dabbled in authorship, how carefully Jerningham folded up the sheets, and sealed them in a packet of impregnable strength. The landlady's son was then pressed into the service, with the promise of a shilling if he performed the service successfully, and the terror of frightful anathemas if he failed in conveying them safely to the Baroness. In spite of this young gentleman's predilection for chuck-farthing and Punch's show, and a desire to go over every post he saw, which

seemed to be an indispensable condition of his being, the pregnant missive reached its destination. And the first notice Jerningham received of its fate was a copy of the "Court Echo," with the commencement of his tale inserted therein, in all the glory of type and printer's ink, "to be continued." His first impulse was to blush with pleasure, his next to detect a fluttering but agreeable fear at the responsibility of the task he had undertaken. With the journal, however, a ticket for the opera was enclosed, and a note, expressing a hope that he would meet the Baroness in her box. The last proposal reassured him, but then came another tremor.

The Farce! aye, there was the rub! He began to feel grey at the liabilities of his new position.

"When the ancients were in any difficulty," said Michael Brent, rousing from a reverie, and drawing a protracted whiff from his pipe, "they called on the gods to aid them; even in the present godless time all have some worship, but *you* will neither minister to Venus nor Bacchus."

"What are Venus and Bacchus to my

farce?" said Jerningham; "they will not pay my bills if the farce fails to do it: look at that tailor's bill."

"A condemnation of your heathenism in every item," replied Brent: "the very tailor has his gods."

"They must be the Furies."

"You mistake, they are the Destinies; don't you remember the poet's line?

'Then came the Destinies with the abhorred *shears*.'

The '*shears*' are a symbol of the craft."

"Here goes, then, to Bacchus," exclaimed Jerningham with a smile. "Ah! as old Fuller said so quaintly, 'doubtless God might have made a better berry than the strawberry, but doubtless God never did;' so it may be said that there is more ambrosial nectar than brandy-and-water; but 'tis a question."

"'In a bowl care may not be,'" sung Brent in mellow notes; "you can no more find it there than you can find a good dinner in a house where the footman has *thin* calves: remember that, Jerningham, my boy, as a golden maxim to be inscribed upon your wall with the reverence of a Chinese; when you dine out, study the knocker (it should be a

goodly round one), and the calves of the men-servants (they should be plethoric), otherwise depend upon it the house is as bad as Belgium for a dinner ; and if you ever eat a beef-steak *there*, you will never forget it : it is impossible to have, in fact, what the Tories call ‘ a stake in the country.’ ”

“ Where will your tongue wander next ? ” said Jerningham. “ It is time for the theatre — *allons !* ”

So they emptied their cups, and descended to the street.

Busy London ! one need not be a Jacques to moralise in thy crowded labyrinths. When “ man, proud man,” wrapt in his little self, and fancying his being the world, and his schemes universal in their import, walks among thy unsympathizing multitudes, can he fail to see his individual nothingness ? What to the fevered million are your single cares ? what to them whether you succeed or fail — whether you reach the goal, or fall headlong in the Hippodrome ? and what trace does your passage through life leave, any more than the footsteps of the lightest wind over the sea, or the sweetest music that ever died in echo over Alpine hills ? None. Jerningham felt this, as

the thousand furrowed faces flitted past him on his way; and he felt it sadly, for such knowledge is bitter to the affectionate, yearning spirit of youth. But, like many distasteful things, it had a healthful meaning. It conveyed that leaf from the volume of experience which teaches us to make our own happiness in ourselves, independently of time and place, and the world's approval and censure.

Armed with the manager's order, Michael Brent led Jerningham through the theatre to the stage-box, and there they quietly ensconced themselves in solitary state. Our hero thought he had never seen a more surly-looking audience; but Michael assured him these ideas were merely qualms of authorship in its blushing virginity, which would pass away and leave him impregnable for all future time, just as the widow receives her second proposal with profound tranquillity, while the maid is all sighs and sobs and simper.

In spite, however, of his pre-occupation, his attention was gradually attracted to the stage. The play was "Hamlet," that most metaphysical and yet most popular of Shakspeare's imaginings. How complete the illusion—for the theatres could boast some actors *then*!

How sublime the distracted sorrow of the Prince of Denmark—the man of the world, struck into weariness of its pleasures; the scholar, unable to find solace for his great grief in the rich mines of learning! How touching the tenderness of Ophelia, and the purity of her lover! What remorse in the royal mother! what gloom on the brow of the guilty King! Until at last, with the inevitable stride of a Grecian Destiny, the wrath of Heaven descends on all, sweeping away even the innocent before its anger is appeased. And upon that most thrilling picture of human life the curtain falls.

The musicians appear again in the orchestra; the shop-boy enters at half-price; the coalheaver in the gallery recreates himself with a shrill whistle; and the old lady in the pit, who has wept her hair out of curl during the tragedy, now dries her eyes with a red silk handkerchief, and wets her lips furtively with the contents of a stone bottle.

The magic has passed away. Reality rules again. Another overture is condemned and executed, and the curtain rises again upon Jer-ningham's farce.

Trippingly dances the dialogue, replete with

a crowd of rich conceits, and buoyant with the light merriment of a young brain. The audience titters, and two little boys from boarding-school scream out their approbation from the opposite box; but there is something wanting. Talent is there, but *tact* is not. It is evidently a first effort; and there are always enemies to fear. Your literary gods love not the intrusion of new stars into their firmament. For a moment the smiles flag, then comes a serious pause over the house, then a low buzz—a scraping of feet—a deadly hiss.

The premonitory hiss of a rattle-snake could not have startled Jerningham more. He rose in his seat, unconscious of all except a sense that judgment was passed, and condemnation at hand. Michael Brent looked ominously grave; the result hung upon a thread—when the action of the piece brought the new actor upon the stage.

His entrance involved the point of the whole farce. In the hands of the comic favourite who had discarded the part, his portion had been calculated upon as the safety-valve that ensured success. Jerningham's disappointment and agitation were so excessive, that he dared not cast a single glance upon the

substitute. He shut his eyes, buried them in his hands, and *listened*.

And it came—not the expected serpent-hiss, but a shout of applause. The scale was turned.

Nothing more quaint than the originality of the new man; and, somehow, the language flowed as naturally from his lips as if the authorship were his own. Nothing to stop the stream now. The boys in the opposite box are kicking with delight. So is the coal-heaver in the gallery. So is the old lady in the pit, who sits with the stone bottle in one hand and the cork in the other, ready to drink; and yet she cannot, for joy. Her hair is out of curl—with laughter this time.

The ordeal is over, the trying half-hour is gone; and once more, amid good-humoured plaudits, falls the curtain. Jerningham is embracing Michael Brent with rapture, when a cry rises for the author; and before he can turn to flee, Michael seizes him by the collar, and places him before the audience, in the front of the box. He bows before them—the boy-author, the pale-browed weaver of fancies, who has commenced the struggle of life with imagination for his only store—and a shout

welcomes him to the arena where more athletic gladiators have fallen and died.

But the new actor is called, too, before the curtain: it is a double triumph. Passing from their box through the dusty defiles of scenery, gilt, and card-board, Jerningham met him as he left the stage. He took his hand, he began to thank him for his exertions, and to compliment him on the talent he had displayed—when lo! he pauses, they look in each other's faces; and, as the actor clasps him in his arms, Jerningham reads through paint and disguise the features of his lost friend, Revel.

"I told you we should win fame," said Jerningham, in a voice that faltered with exquisite happiness; "but I dreamed not that, in our separation, we were carving it out for each other."

"How I have sorrowed at our parting!" replied Revel—and something like a tear confirmed his words—"but I will never despond again—

‘———give me your hand,
And let me all your fortunes understand.’

Full of Shakspeare still, you see. Won't we make a night of it?"

"*Nunc est bibendum, et pede libero pulsanda tellus,*" exclaimed Michael Brent, "which means—Now or never is the time to make a night of it!"

END OF SECOND BOOK.

B O O K I I I.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SOCIETY OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE.

CALM upon the surface, but troubled in the depths, was the stream of life in Paris during the last months of 1815. Still restless minds were to be found whose dream was change; still fevered relics of many a long campaign believed that the great battle might perhaps have been fought without avail, and that a time might yet be in store when the soldier should wipe the rust from his sword, and once more throw away the scabbard. Still fallen ministers and their no less prostrate satellites were labouring to undermine the new *regime*; the rapacious minions of the past were suc-

ceeded by other plunderers; the vicious ministrants to vice had been displaced by newer panders; there was everywhere innovation, and therefore discontent. Thus many schemes were afloat, with objects that differed in their final intent, and yet agreeing in the immediate means to be adopted. Widely distinct were the ultimate views which united Paul Didier and his companions, which lured Talleyrand and Fouché from their stealthy repose, which induced M. Decazes to look on with apparent ignorance or apathy, and which caused the young Duke who was heir to the other Bourbon branch to link himself with plotters and adventurers; yet the policy of each was the policy of all—their first step was Revolution!

The bond which linked together these dissimilar elements was called the Society of National Independence; and although Paul Didier was the ostensible leader of its councils, the real motive influence proceeded from a far higher source. It was to a Duke of the royal blood that Paul Didier resorted for his final instructions. Before that young prince, *then* fair in fame, *then* unsullied in the world's eye, and in the presence of Talleyrand, the subtle architect and destroyer of governments, Paul

Didier now sat, his eye, as ever, wild with enthusiasm, his long white hair waving over his brow like an age-honoured banner over a castle height.

“Your mien is lit with the expectancy of victory,” said the Duke to Didier; “yet your words are grave, and import a mournful spirit. Have you misgivings touching our cause?”

“Who has *not* misgivings when he throws the die upon which *all* is staked!” replied Didier.

“The hour of trial is that which should find us most calm,” added Talleyrand, with characteristic imperturbation. He took a pinch of snuff, and submitted his gold box deferentially to the Duke.

“True, most true!” answered Didier sadly; “but I am old, and the sands have nearly run through the allotted space. *You*, Monseigneur, may lose and stake again; but this is *my* last hazard—*my* last venture on the wild sea of ambition. A warning voice whispers me that, though triumph may bring the realization of all my hopes, failure will confirm more than all my fears. I can face death as I have braved it before; but there are others dearer

to me than life, who are less steeled to destiny. I cannot forget *them*."

"Nor will I," said the young Duke, solemnly; and his countenance glowed with an expression of earnest sincerity which it had *then* not lost the power to wear. "Whether our cause succeed or fail, whether you reach the high place marked out by me or not, the welfare of those you love shall be my care."

"My wife—my children!" said Didier, in a tone almost imploring.

"Such honour and preferment as my power can bestow shall be theirs," continued the Duke. "There are friendships superior to the vicissitudes of time, whose fulness is too complete to gather fresh aliment from success, whose roots are too deeply twined to be torn away by misfortune: such shall be mine to the family of my friend, Paul Didier."

"Then I am satisfied," said the old man, in a more cheerful tone; "and my mind dwells hopefully upon its appointed work. Adieu, Monseigneur; we shall meet as conquerors, or *never* meet again. I shall place you on the throne of France, or hide my defeat and dis-

appointment in the grave. *Vive la Société de l'Indépendance Nationale !*"

He kissed the hand of the Duke, bowed to Talleyrand, and hastened from their presence to set forth on his journey to Lyons.

It was the last night of December—the last night of one of the most eventful years that ever issued from the womb of Time. And, though every facility had been provided to accelerate the progress of Didier, still the way was long, and the eternal avenues of trees and the chill, wintry sky, so apathetically calm, formed a contrast to the vital import of his schemes that rather excited than soothed. The dynasties that had fallen, the thrones that had been reared only to crumble, the conflicting hopes and fears that had met like angry waves, and subsided like empty foam, all passed in review before his mind's eye as the hurried images of a distempered dream. Forth from that busy crowd of striving phantoms seemed to issue a voice, and on that voice were borne words of despondent meaning; and Didier's heart sickened as he *felt* that the interpretation was, "Vanity! all is vanity!" Too well he knew that, in the world's eye,

though successful ambition be a virtue, an impotent revolution is a crime.

While his mind staggered on, over the sea of Thought, they reached fresh post-houses; and clattering hoofs were loud upon court-yards, and lights danced before him for a few moments, and horses were hustled into harness, and oaths flew about, and the master of the hostel would attempt to pay his respects at the carriage-window. Still, retired into the darkest corner, and folded, as it were, in the web of his own reflections, Didier sat silently absorbed; and they hurried on again along the endless moonlit avenues.

Then the form of his thoughts changed. Instead of wandering over the varied destinies of nations, they settled down into a steady review of his own life. With a vivid actuality, every portion of the past started into renewed existence. Once more he played around his mother's knee, and heard the music of her voice, and saw upon her face that sweet look of love that had smiled upon his childhood. Once more he felt the transition to youth, and the dawning of worldly pleasures. Yet again he stood in the glory of early manhood—in the

time of the smooth brow and the wreathed hair—and heard the whisper of his heart's mistress, as she clung closer to his side to tell him that she was his. Other companions, too, who had plucked the flowers on their path as they loitered together, or toiled with him over the stern tasks of their career—they came too, though some were dead, and some were far away, and all were scattered, yet each appeared "in his habit as he lived," and moved in spectral silence through that still December night before the mental gaze of Didier.

A fearful revelation is it from the tablets of Memory—a dire opening of that book where the conscience has inscribed every action of the past, when some maddening moment of danger or suspense shows us too truly that, although not subject to the will, all our good and evil deeds are indeed stored up in the mind which must hereafter be its own judge.

But no opening now for retreat. On, on hurries the wanderer, unscared by shadows, unwavering in purpose, though shaken, as mortal must be, by the whispering voice within. And fresh post-houses were passed, fresh lights flashed over the way, fresh horses bore him to the expected goal. And at

last, over all dawned the first grey light of morning.

While he leaned forth from the carriage-window, to breathe its cheering influence, and lave his brow in its cool, misty beams, he was aware of a figure riding beside him along the paved road. It was a horseman, well mounted, yet lightly clad; and as Didier gazed, he thought it strange that he had not heard the approaching rattle of hoofs, and that, although the horseman was beside him, spurring on at rapid speed, no sound accompanied his progress. He looked at his own postboy, but saw him sleepily urging on his team, in evident ignorance of the horseman's presence. He made an effort to speak, but his voice died away in his throat, and he could neither utter a syllable, nor remove his rivetted gaze.*

* Lest this incident should appear supernatural and overstrained, the reader's attention is invited to the following parallel circumstance in Goëthe's autobiography: "I now rode along the footpath towards Drusenheim; and here one of the most singular forebodings took possession of me. I saw, not with the eyes of the body, but with those of the mind, *my own figure* coming towards me on horseback, and on the same road, attired in a dress which I had never worn; it was pike-grey (hecht-grau), with somewhat of gold. As soon as I

Suddenly the stranger turned his face towards him, and Didier's eyeballs strained back the glance. Pale as he knew his own lineaments were, haggard as they had long been, and doubly so as he knew they must be *then*, the same white hair, frosted with the snows of three-score winters, the same brow, within whose grave-like furrows a wilderness of cares lay buried—all the features of the stranger were his own; and still the horseman rode beside him, and still upon Paul Didier glared calmly, placidly, the ominous likeness of himself. Strange to say, he felt no fear at a sight that might have made a brave spirit quail; but he watched the figure with a kind of breathless curiosity, as though a page had been opened before him of some unhallowed book, or a momentary illumination of the Soul had given it power to pierce into the future.

And the vision did not wane, but it changed. A confused mass of images followed. The

shook myself out of this dream, the figure had entirely disappeared. It is strange, however, that eight years afterwards I found myself on the very road to pay one more visit to Frederica in the dress of which I had dreamed, and which I wore not from choice, but from accident!"—p. 433.

figure beside him, no longer mounted, seemed to walk, pinioned and sad, in the midst of a dread cavalcade. Silence suspended the very air, and the stillness of deep awe was on the countenances of the crowd. All was hushed—all, save the low promptings of the priest, as he strove to instil the hopes of heaven into the spirit parting from earth; and a sight of horror succeeded—a raised scaffolding, and gleaming arms, and the figure, his second self, stood upon the verge of eternity! And a loud shriek rent the sky, in tones that he knew too well; and then, again, silence reigned, through which came one sad sound alone—the low breathing of the priest. “*Dies iræ, dies illa, solvet sæclum in favilla!*” And the blow had fallen; the soul had winged its flight; and Didier, exhausted with agitation, sank back in his carriage. The morning-star was waning in the light of day, as they passed the Barrière and entered Lyons.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TRAITOR.

WHILE the conspirator Didier, worn with travel and forebodings of coming ill, lay down upon his couch to repose the unstrung powers of nature, the evil destiny foreshadowed by his fears was already working out its task.

Closeted with General Maringoné, the Commandant of the Department of Lyons, was a disguised peasant. The low brow and matted hair of this man did not bespeak a heart acutely sensible of the feelings of shame; but there was something in his flurried speech and lowering eye that marked him for a traitor. Eager, however, as he seemed to be for the ruin of those whose intents he revealed, his words were characterized by an uneasy reserve, as if he feared to say too much. There was an evident endeavour to ensure the destruction of his *victims*, but to spare others equally im-

plicated, who happened to be for the time his *friends*. General Maringoné watched him with a piercing eye, that penetrated all, while it appeared to observe nothing.

“And the chief movers of this plot,” said the General, “are—”

“Upon this list,” replied the peasant, in the English language, which his questioner had also adopted.

“Humph!” ejaculated the General. “Ah! ‘Rosset, paper-painter’—he had better not come to the *brush* with me! ‘Montain, doctor of medicine’—the *rogue*! what does he with revolutions? Wants to study gunshot wounds, I suppose—*scelerat*! it is his duty to cure, and not to kill. ‘Lavalette’—pshaw! ‘Jacquenot’—*diable*! ‘Royd’—*voleurs*! here’s a *pot-pourri* of iniquity! the two last soldiers—ah, warriors whom Napoleon called ‘*mes enfans*,’ and pulled by the ear! Can *Le Petit Caporal* be the object of their temerity?”

The animadversions of the General were conveyed in that low tone, half aloud and half soliloquizing, which calls for no reply. The informer remained silent, until Maringoné, rousing from his speculations, paced the apart-

ment thoughtfully once or twice, and then reseated himself to proceed with the inquiry.

"You know, doubtless, the time fixed for the execution of this pleasantry?" he continued.

"The next night but one," answered the peasant, uneasily. "But am I safe? You'll deal honestly with me, won't you, after I've told you all I knows? You'll see me all right with the police and the rest on 'em?"

"As safe as such honesty deserves," replied Maringoné, curling his moustache with somewhat of an ironical smile. "And the hour for the attack, my worthy friend? what is the hour?"

"Midnight," said the informer. "But suppose my friends—no, not my *friends*, but them as is on the list—should larn that I peached? It's them I fears."

"Be tranquil, as virtue should be," exclaimed the General. "You shall be provided for. But the *plan*, *mon brave*—the plan of action for this little *jeu d'esprit*; you have not told me the *plan* of your *friends*."

"No, no—not my *friends*," said the peasant, nervously, again: "not *my* friends—I owes 'em nothin', except—"

"Your aversion as a peaceable man," interposed Maringoné—"we will not quarrel about terms. The plan, you were about to say, was—"

"Then this is it," replied the informer, ceasing to attempt any further prevarication, so subtly was he led to the point by his questioner. "The watchmen, you know, as is in the trick and on duty, is to come to the Hotel de Ville, under pretence that they've took a prisoner, and to scrag the sentinel; and then—but you'll see me safe?"

"I will see you *secure*," said Maringoné.

"And then Rosset is to advance with the rest of the conspiraytors, and scrag the soldiers and the guard; and the cannon is to begin a-barkin' from the Place Louis le Grand, and the bells is to ring for the insurrection."

"Ah," said Maringoné, sinking back in his chair, and allowing his pent-up breath to escape in a long sigh, *c'est une affaire finie*."

"And you'll not desert me?" asked the informer.

"On no account; nor must *you* leave us. You will stay here in Lyons; and when the crisis is past, come to me for your reward. Give me your passport."

"Here you are," replied the informer, fumbling it out from among a mass of greasy papers. "And now I suppose I may go free?" he added, not without some apprehension touching this last demand.

"You are at liberty to depart."

No sooner was the retreating step of the informer audible upon the lower stair than the General rang a small silver bell upon his table. A *huissier* entered.

"See that the man who just left me is kept under strict, but secret, *surveillance*," said the General. "Hasten!"

The *huissier* made the usual sign of military obedience, and withdrew without a syllable. The General rang the silver bell again. His Secretary entered.

"Write orders to arrest every one named on that list."

The Secretary sat down to his task, and Maringoné proceeded to pen a hurried despatch to Paris.

As the peasant left the door of the General, and before the *huissier* was yet on his track, he felt a tap on the shoulder. He turned round hastily, and found himself in the presence of Paul Didier.

“ I would speak with you,” said the latter :
“ follow me.”

Passing through the town into a distant *quartier*, Paul Didier motioned the peasant into one of the *cafés*, and entered a private apartment. Not long after, the *huissier* arrived, and having doffed his uniform and assumed an ordinary bourgeois garb, he loitered among the domino players for some time, and trifled lazily with the balls upon the billiard-table ; but still the object of his search kept out of sight. At length he opened a fire of gallantry upon the dark-eyed goddess, who presided over the pyramids of sugar and piles of tea-spoons, and rank and file of *liqueur* bottles. The desired information concerning the whereabouts of his victim was speedily wormed out of the talkative *Lyonnaise*, so the *huissier* lit his pipe, and waited.

After some time the door of the private apartment opened ; the *huissier's* eyes were on the alert in an instant, but it was not the peasant that passed forth, and he resumed his newspaper. Gliding as swiftly as he could, without exciting suspicion, from the spot where the interview had taken place, Paul Didier hastened to the house of Lavalette : on

reaching it he found that his brother conspirator had been already arrested. All his misgivings recurred to him : the cause was evidently betrayed, and revival of it was as hopeless as delay was dangerous. He hurried on foot through the *barrière*, and then taking horse spurred away in the direction of the department of Isère. Twenty-four hours afterwards he rode through the gates of Grenoble.

Meantime the disguised *huissier*, weary of keeping watch, strolled carelessly into the private apartment of the *café* which Didier had left ; and there, stunned and gagged, lay the object of his *surveillance*, huddled upon the floor.

The peasant, whose treachery had been detected by Didier, was no other than Shingle !

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BARONESS—THE NOVEL.

THERE was nothing in the world more delectable than the mid-day *tête-à-têtes* at which the Baroness primed Edward Jerningham with the incidents which were to be worked into his novel for the *Court Echo*. Seated in her charming little boudoir, attired in graceful *deshabille*, she would turn her eyes from the young author to the trees and glades of the park, spreading before her window ; and there, as in a mirror, the past seemed to rise before her gaze in every variety of light and shade. What strange things she told ! What curious developments of life she must have seen ! Jerningham always sat rivetted : for even her revelations seemed something less than she could tell if she chose to impart *all*. Occasionally, her habit of story-telling would entirely carry her away ; the delicate sketches of cha-

racter into which she diverged appeared to lead her on to the borders of her own history : and then, such a look of sadness stole over her cheek—such a crowd of reminiscences fluttered over her beautiful brow, that our hero would have given worlds to prevent the sudden silence which was sure to succeed. Nothing that she told of others seemed so full of romance as the events that she concealed regarding herself.

As the great web of London life, moreover, became daily less intricate to Jerningham—as poverty, that highway to knowledge of the world, made him more acquainted with its narrow ways, much that he scarcely understood at first became perfectly comprehensible; and in the same way that Schiller declared many problems touching our destiny to be clear to him upon his deathbed, though the film of life had hitherto rendered them obscure—so Jerningham felt the dawning of worldly wisdom, as the carelessness of youth fled away; and he was speedily enabled to work up his task to the content and even delight of the Baroness.

The fashionable young ladies and listless young gentlemen, who assisted their digestion

over the matutinal muffins with the light literature of the *Court Echo*, were in languid ecstasies at the new tale. Every character breathed of the drawing-room; the hero and heroine inhaled an atmosphere of attar of roses; the scandal insinuated rather than asserted was so piquant, that the whole formed a rare *bonne bouche* for the idle. Every one was tickled except a rival editress, who was the principal object of satire.

In the course of these conversations, moreover, Jerningham was surprised to discover how intimately the Baroness was acquainted with the private life even of Lord Haverdale. On this subject he was naturally curious, and would willingly have questioned her more minutely than he was wont. But experience taught him that inquiries of this nature always defeated their own end, as she invariably avoided scrutiny regarding the slightest detail in her narratives. The only chance of eliciting any particular he desired to learn, was to let her conversation wander on without comment, assuming at the same time an air of unconcern.

“Poor Lord Haverdale!” she said, one day, in her dreamy manner. “He resembles

the stormy petrel: he may not bring the tempest, but he is sure to be fluttering in it. I found him in a revolution, steeped to the lips in intrigue when we first met. He is no wiser now. Change is the only mistress to whom he is constant."

"You have known him long?" asked Jerningham carelessly.

"Long enough to know him thoroughly," she replied. "He is going to France, and it requires no prophetic knowledge to divine that there is mischief brewing. Ere long, or I mistake, he will seek to engage *you* in his schemes, whatever they may be. Wait and behold if I am not, for once, a seer."

"But France is now tranquil," said Jerningham, fearing to evince any curiosity, though he felt it keenly.

"Tranquil as the volcano, to use a hacknied metaphor," answered the Baroness; "calm on the surface, bubbling in the depths. France would be nothing without conspiracy. Lord Haverdale, sated as he is with worldly pleasure, would be still less without France."

"It seems strange," continued Jerningham, "that the possessor of so much wealth should risk it in foreign quarrels."

“ You think so, *mon cher* Edward, because you are not fettered in golden chains. You do not know how eagerly the rich bird longs for freedom from the prison of custom : how wantonly he despoils his golden plumage by beating his wings against the bars. The soldier, ‘ seeking reputation even at the cannon’s mouth,’ is a feeble type of satiety in search of a sensation.”

“ And so *I* am to play Pierre to his Jaffier?” exclaimed Jerningham, laughingly ; hoping, but not expecting, an explicit reply : “ In that case, Venice may yet be preserved.”

“ *Nous verrons !*” was the rejoinder. Jerningham saw that further pursuit of the subject was useless, and rose to take his leave. “ Adieu !” she added, taking his hand with that winning frankness which had captivated many a heart besides his. “ Send me the next chapter of the novel with all speed. Ah ! happy boy ! Lord Haverdale would give his peerage to possess your youth, and barter his heaviest coffer for your lightness of heart. Thank God, my Jerningham, that you are not yet twenty.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MOSSY BED THAT CONCEALS THE SERPENT.

“ In the midway of this our mortal life,
I wandered in a gloomy wood astray,
Gone from the path direct.”

CAREY'S DANTE.

NOT at all altered in point of age by the passage of the revolving years, though much altered with regard to his fortunes; still roguish, but exquisitely sleek; scorning top-boots, and all such evidences of vulgar servitude; arrayed as my lord's particular gentleman, in suit of black and tie of matchless whiteness; a very prince of valets, Mr. Lorrie Stocks was arranging Lord Haverdale's dressing-table, in his house in May Fair, with just the same outward *insouciance* and inward thoughtful calculation that had characterized him twenty years before in Jerningham Hall.

Every one in the servants' room liked Mr. Stocks ; he told such racy stories, and played such a good hand at whist, and now and then gave a little party down stairs in his own apartment, to which the under-servants felt it quite an honour to be asked, in so gentleman-like a style was the festivity conducted ; everybody liked Mr. Stocks, and yet every one feared him too, for he had unbounded influence with my lord. And Mr. Stocks had saved money somehow, and made small speculations in all sorts of things ; more, indeed, than people could exactly understand. Whether he heard of a cheap horse, or a promising beer-shop, or funds were rising, or any new bubble afloat, Mr. Stocks had always money at command to seize the opportunity, and turn it to account. A flourishing man was Mr. Lorrie Stocks, the quondam village castaway.

Eleven o'clock chimed musically from the French *pendule* on the chimney-piece, when Fire, the old deer-hound, sitting patiently at its master's door, rose up to its splendid height, pricked its ears, and whined. Lorrie knew at once that Lord Haverdale had left his couch. Replacing on the table, with a furtive look, some unopened letters, the super-

scriptions of which he had been examining, he smoothed his countenance to its usual placid serenity, and unclosed the chamber door just in time for the tenant to pass through into the dressing-room. Wrapped in a magnificent gown of Indian silk, edged with the choicest miniver, and his feet lazily inserted in slippers of the same costly materials, Lord Haverdale sank yawning into a *fauteuil*, with his back to the streaming sunlight.

Mr. Stocks rang the bell very gently, and immediately upon the summons a French page appeared, bearing a small salver with a single cup of coffee, and some pale brandy in an exquisitely wrought glass of minute dimensions.

His Lordship received his accustomed morning refreshment in silence, and sipped it leisurely.

Lorrie busied himself apparently in his master's service, though he did nothing. The French page vanished, and re-appeared with a morning paper. The old deer-hound, couched at the foot of the *fauteuil*, waited with a dignified air to be beckoned and caressed. The furniture of the apartment was tasteful as well as massive in its splendour: wealth had done

its utmost. The owner sat in the midst like a later Dives, with no importunate Lazarus to offend him with his sores. Yet Dives was mortal, and subject to the capricious fates that govern mundane things.

"Remove, and give me the paper," said Lord Haverdale.

"*Oui, milord.*"

"Any news?" he continued.

"From France, monseigneur—this column," replied the page; "and letters for *milord.*"

Lorrie handed them to Lord Haverdale, and the page withdrew.

Some half-dozen epistles were then perused and thrown aside. At last, one, with a foreign postmark, seemed to attract his attention. It spoke of coming events that involved the highest interests in the game of life for which man can risk the hazard of the die. It urged him to come quickly to the field with one whom he could trust. A great cause was to be tried—a mighty struggle was at hand. No petty stakes would reward the victor. The lists were open; the warriors were in their harness; and empire might crown the winner of the day.

Lord Haverdale's cold blue eye lit up with

the excitement of aroused ambition. He half rose in his chair, when stirred by this sudden animation : Fire licked his hand, and whined to be caressed. Recalled to himself, Haverdale remembered the presence of Lorrie, and concealed his thoughts again, under the mask of repose.

“ I will soon be there,” he muttered inwardly. “ But whom to take?—whom to trust? I wish I had a son.”

And then flitted through his memory for a few brief moments the recollection of his utter loneliness in the world. He gazed vacantly upon the magnificence around him : to-day it was his, and to-morrow his death would give it to a stranger. Thoughts of many a broken vow ; of promises made to the young and beautiful—won, at last, only to be discarded carelessly ; of children, the fruits of youthful *liaisons*, straying everywhere, knowing no father’s love from him, nor yielding him affection back. Thoughts, sad and sickening, distracted his breast for a few short seconds : but not longer—his fertile mind soon burst its thrall.

“ Whom to trust?” he muttered again. “ I wish I had a son ; stay, the very thing—

the boy Jerningham! Is all ready for departure, Stocks?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Prepare the larger chariot. I shall have a companion."

"Very good, my Lord," answered Lorrie, who knew his master's present humour too well to indulge in any other than a monosyllabic reply.

"And so for France," said Haverdale, with the long sigh of a man arrived at a difficult decision. "What's this?"

It was another letter, which he had passed over. He broke the seal, and its perusal made his broad brow rigid with corrugated furrows.

"You are about to leave the country," it ran: "I know you and your schemes; but ere you depart I must see you once more, perhaps for the last time. I do not implore you to consent—I dare you to refuse. Our trysting-place shall be the Forest of Jerningham!"

No signature to those authoritative words: no need of it. There was only *one* brooding spirit that dared dictate in such terms as that to the fiery peer, Lord Haverdale!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SUBLIME AND THE RIDICULOUS OF
LITERATURE.—THE CHILDREN-LOVERS.

“ For not on downy plumes, nor under shade
Of canopy, reposing fame is won ;
Without which, whosoe'er consumes his days
Leaveth such vestige of himself on earth
As smoke in air or foam upon the wave ! ”

CAREY'S DANTE'S INFERNO.

“ ——I stood in unimaginable trance,
And agony that cannot be remembered,
Listening with horrid hope.”

COLERIDGE'S REMORSE.

AMID the phases, various as they were, of his author-life, Edward Jerningham found much to interest him, but still not a little to excite disgust. It is a most unromantic declension from aspirations after immortal fame to the mortal bathos of a bookseller's shop. A work

long pondered, elaborately wrought up, the fruit of many a fevered dream and sleepless night, is finished at last ; your author throws down his pen with a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction at the conclusion of his toil ; and then, perhaps, feels as Gibbon felt when he wrote the last lines of his deathless history—a kind of pensive sorrow that the work is done. The offspring of his imagination is no sooner born, than, thankless as the daughters of hoary Lear, it brings a thousand wrongs and contumelies upon its author. First, the bookseller, a critic possibly who can scarcely spell, suggests the agony of alterations. What are the subtle views embodied in your pages to his opaque vision ? He cuts out your best chapter, or makes you write an unmeaning one to introduce an unsold engraving or discuss a popular topic of the day. And then the publisher has a speculation of his own a-foot ; so how can he attend to yours ? Next come the critics, whom the author should have asked to dinner, but did not ; and being a stranger, *they* review his book without reading it, and bespatter it plentifully with critical mud. Last scene of all doth bring us to the public, and here let us pause reverently. What can

the poor public do ? torn to pieces by tumblers ; misled by mountebanks ; the victim of singing mice and whistling oysters ; beguiled astray by advertising vans that set forth nothing less than the impossible. Poor public ! how shouldst thou find time for subtleties, dug, like truth, from so deep a well ? How canst thou dive for pearls into the caves of ocean, when sufficient for thy amusement are the bubbles, lit by sunlight, on the surface ! If people *will* forget the present, and study immortality, art thou to blame for leaving them to the enjoyment of their own conceit ?

And this conceit had seized upon Edward Jerningham. As he continued the novel for the Baroness Flamingo's weekly journal, its errors, as a first effort, soon became apparent. His taste altered, with less experience to produce the change than is usual in authorship ; and though it pleased the readers of the *Court Echo*, it failed to give *him* satisfaction. So he planned a great work that was to embody all the learning of his studious years ; all the knowledge of life that the world had yielded him ; all the poetry and wisdom that burned like volcanic fire within his mind, yearning for utterance. A work that should sound rich

depths for the thinking, and strike a chord in the lightest fancy. Seneca should not be too heavy, nor Plautus too light.

As yet, however, the vision was vague; the creation was not called forth from intellectual chaos. Ere it reached its nascent time there were many occupations to engage our hero. Led insensibly by Revel to the drama, and by Greville to newspaper literature, Jerningham gradually found his leisure turned to profitable employment, for both these friends were powerful agents in his favour. It was after a lengthened conversation one morning with Greville, who had spoken long and tenderly of his father, and the splendours of the old Hall of Jerningham twenty years before, that the young author walked back pensively to his lodging in Westminster. And there, amid scattered books, and a negligent *mélange* of printers' proofs, half-finished manuscripts, and countless incongruous materials too sacred to be put to rights, sat as fair a form as ever he had pourtrayed in his dreaming fictions. It was Marie.

Driven from the old house with drunken blows by strangers, who grew weary of continued charity, where was the stricken found-

ling to find refuge—where, save with him who had saved her life! So, late at night, some weeks before, when the snow lay pall-like on the empty streets, and the wind howled in fearful moans its wintry hymn, came a low beseeching knock at Jerningham's door; and in another instant, pale, trembling, humble, "fearful of offending," her frozen frame bent supplicating at his feet. Her tale was soon told, and food and raiment provided, while Jerningham kissed away her tears of gratitude. It was strange to him, poor as he was, that any one should seek protection at such hands as *his*; and so, in the fulness of his heart, he told her she should be his little housekeeper, and manage his home.

As time passed on, he was pleased to see her features soften from their former sorrowful harshness to the gentle contour of girlhood. The traces of famine and ill-treatment soon disappeared. With the small sums he gave her, she restored her dress to gracefulness in feminine though untutored taste. Her hands grew thorough-bred in their natural whiteness; her eyes full of light; her voice of gladness; and now, with her silken hair waved

away across the chiselled cheek, she sat by Jerningham's fireside, a household spirit that made all look beautiful.

"I knew you were coming," she exclaimed, with flashing eyes, as Jerningham entered. "I seemed to hear your footsteps whole streets away, hurrying homewards. Give me your coat—there; your hat—ah! now kiss me, my protector."

He pressed his lips upon her violet eyes, and she sat down beside him innocent and sisterly.

"So kind of you," she continued, "to return so soon: and yet, I *felt* that you were near—that you were thinking of home."

"I *have* been thinking of you," said Jerningham: "but how could you tell that, my little seer?"

"Oh, love knows all things; I cannot tell how: words ere they are uttered—deeds ere they are done—and I love *you*," she added, after a pause, during which she had gazed on him wistfully, "more than tongue can tell. I would toil for you, or starve with you; aye, die for you, if it were only to save your noble heart a single pang!" And she kissed his hand with tearful fondness.

Dangerous accents these from female lips, when the speaker is young and fair, and the listener filled with passionate imaginings.

“ So you *do* love me, then, Marie ? ”

“ Ah, yes ! ” she replied, nestling up to him.

“ Then you shall come with me to the country to-day. You see what *I* am—poor, penniless, insignificant. You shall see what my father and forefathers were—you shall look upon the lofty towers, once theirs—the domain they owned, stretching half across the county. I have need of such a sight : I must remember my ancestors, that I may know what their last child should be.”

Rather overawed by these words, which made Jerningham in *her* eyes quite a hero of romance, but still so happy, so proud of the invitation, Marie was ready for the journey in a very few seconds. And so they walked together to the coach-office; and taking places outside the stage, were wafted, after a three hours' ride through the crisp, clear, wintry air, to the door of the Crooked Billet Hotel at Violetdale.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ANCESTRAL HALL.—THE UNDYING HATE.

“ Hold thee still ;
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill !
So prythee go with me ! ”

SHAKESPERE.

“ Where shall the villain rest,
He the deceiver ;
Who would win maiden’s breast,
Ruin, and leave her ? ”

SCOTT.

“ WALK in, mum ; walk in, sir ; best hotel where the coach stops,” said a lively, red-nosed individual, rushing out of the snuggerly behind the bar. “ First-rate beds, sir ; good accommodation for horse and man, and neat wines.”

Ushering them in with just the same stereotyped remarks as ever, who should it be but Hiccup, grown ancient in years but youthful in spirits.

"What, *you* here still?" said Jerningham.
"The king of landlords never dies. *Le roi est mort : vive le roi !*"

"No, sir, not dead yet, though my poor wife is—Mrs. Hiccup as was. Ah! she had an uncommon loud voice to be sure; but she died like a Christian, sir. Parson Pringle come and consoled her when she took ill arter the tripe that Sunday night; and she only said she should like to lay hands on that ere butcher as sold it, and then had a glass o' 'hot with,' and went off like a babby."

"Not married *again*, eh?—are you, Hiccup?" said Jerningham slyly.

Hiccup's face turned pale, and his nose more purple, at the notion; and, as if it had disturbed his equanimity, he showed them the state apartment in silence, and bowed himself out.

The neighbourhood around was as familiar to Jerningham as the old hostel. He had made many a stolen journey to both during his schoolboy days; and now, feeling an indefinable desire to see the old haunts once more, he hastened with Marie towards the ancestral home of his fathers.

No alteration in the quaint, old village of

Violetdale. The doctor's house was as much like a pill-box as ever: the young lady-boarders paraded two and two in their daily walk from and to the select seminary, quite in the Noah's-ark style, with the same dresses and sashes; the governesses, who taught "all the extras," prim and proper in the rear.

Up the one straggling street; along the winding lane; beside the skirts of the forest for a little distance, and they entered the park. Jerningham's heart beat quick; his eyes fell to the ground; and when he raised them, they stood in front of the noble dwelling where luxury had fostered his infant years.

"How beautiful!" said Marie, gazing on the regal pile. But when she looked on Jerningham's face, she almost regretted having intruded even that brief remark upon one so overcharged with sadness as *he* had suddenly become.

If change had come upon the Hall, it had not deteriorated from its massive splendour. The retired alderman from Bucklersbury, who now rented it, was as proud of its traditional glories as if he had bought *them*, and lavished his civic wealth to keep up the appearance of the old *regime*.

" 'This *was* our dwelling-place," said Jerningham ; " where mine *is*, you know. But I have not come here, like a driveller, to repine. Enough for *me* to remember my father's sorrows, not brood upon his faults : to think of my mother's loving gentleness, not her wrongs."

Marie's voice was too choked for utterance : nor, indeed, *dared* she have interrupted that sad soliloquy, which seemed like a commune between the living and the dead.

" When I was a schoolboy," continued Jerningham, taking Marie's hand, though without looking at her, " this was my seat at holiday-time ; and here I have lain, at the foot of this old oak, from sunrise to sunset, thinking of many things—the past, the present, and the future—dreaming, if you will—and yet those dreams were sweet—of *what* did I dream, think you ? "

" Of great things, I am sure," said Marie, simply ; " you are *so* noble."

" Of great things, indeed," he replied, laughing scornfully. " I dreamed of winning it back ; I dreamed of fame bought by the sabre's edge, and at the cannon's mouth ; I dreamed of dominion won by the talisman,

knowledge ; I dreamed, like a fairy-tale teller, how soaring spirits rose, by their innate power, to wealth and rule. Ah, ah ! childlike I dreamed of returning, after long years of toil, to buy the old Hall back—was I not a fool, Marie ? ”

“ No,” said Marie, with enthusiasm in her violet eyes, “ rather think that you were a prophet ! ”

“ I *will* think so,” he exclaimed ; “ have I not youth and strength to bring into the arena ? If I succeed, my forefathers will smile on me, from their canvas on the old walls, for restoring them to honour ; if I fail, no matter—the dream has lit my path with splendour, though it dies at last ! ”

As he ceased speaking, a servant appeared, descending the age-worn steps towards them. It was to inquire their business so near the house.

“ Tell your master, the alderman,” replied our hero, still swelling with lofty thoughts, “ that Edward Jerningham is here, to see the home of his fathers.”

Before the man, who looked rather abashed, could reply, Jerningham was striding back, on the way to the Crooked Billet. Insensibly,

however, the excitement of his feelings waned into tranquillity; he sank into a reverie, and gently begged Marie to pursue her path to the hostel alone for a short distance, that he might indulge his reflections undisturbed.

With a delicacy peculiarly feminine, she gave no unkind interpretation to his request; but appreciating his motives in an instant, moved on in front, deeply affected in her artless spirit by the scene she had witnessed.

Jerningham followed through the Park, marking every slight declivity and moss-grown tree, until he left the precincts of the Hall; and then his eyes fell again, and he was proceeding thoughtfully along the road through the Forest, when a tap on the shoulder from a light riding-cane caused him to look up. He could scarcely believe his sight; before him stood Lord Haverdale.

"Well met!" said his lordship; "you are the very person I sought—but did not look for here. What brings you to Violetdale?"

"I came to see the Hall," replied Jerningham.

Lord Haverdale's countenance grew a shade more marble-like; but he soon recovered himself.

"No help for the past," he said; "fresh glories may be won while you are dreaming of those that are gone. I have need of you. Will you follow where I lead? It is not for small stakes that I risk the hazard of the die."

Jerningham looked into Lord Haverdale's pale, cold features as into a book; and for once seemed to read truth.

"I will!" answered Jerningham: "what is my task to be?"

"You shall know anon," answered Haverdale; "but first I have business with one who——"

"Is here!" added a voice behind them.

They turned, and, leaning against a tree a few feet from them, Jerningham saw a female figure in gipsy garb, whom Haverdale knew too well: it was Ayesha. The meeting seemed so strange, that our hero was about to withdraw in wonderment, but Haverdale beckoned him to remain.

And there they stood once more face to face, the wronger and the wronged! In the natural costume she now wore, her beauty seemed still in some measure to have survived the ravages of time and sorrow. Her head was thrown haughtily back—that small Ma-

donna-like head which years before, and almost in that very spot, had lain upon his breast in loving peacefulness ; her cheek—never again to recline beside his—was sunken and worn, but yet flushed, as she stood before them, with many emotions ; while her eyes gleamed wildly with a kind of derisive scorn.

“ I *knew* you would obey my summons ! ” she said ; “ I *felt* that we should meet again on this side of the dark deep void of death—though this is but a poor trysting-place ; a strange confessional for the luxurious Lord of Haverdale to recount his sins in ! ”

“ What would you, woman ? ” he exclaimed, half-angrily.

“ I ask for ‘ *my own* ! ’ ” she replied. “ I do not ask you for my lost honour, which nothing can ever restore ; I do not ask you for my lost happiness, which you won like the lightest feather, and destroyed like the vainest toy ; nor seek I to gain back the proud untainted thoughts that once were mine ; I ask you not for wealth, nor love, nor virtue ; I ask you for ‘ *my own* ! ’ ”

“ What mean you ? ” he answered.

“ My child ! ” she responded falteringly ; and a mother’s weakness seemed to triumph

for a space over her haughty spirit; "where is *she*? Shamefully as you have wronged me, and beyond redemption, I could still almost forgive if you restored me my child!"

"You ask what is impossible!" said Haverdale. "I have sought her myself in vain. The servant to whom I entrusted her when—"

"You deserted me," interposed Ayesha.

"When we parted," continued Haverdale, without noticing her interruption, "died somewhere in England between the coast and London; the child disappeared beyond all trace; her fate is a mystery I cannot explain."

"Then you *will* not give me even *this* consolation?" said Ayesha incredulously.

"I *can* not," he replied; "great as is the gulf that separates your path from mine, and keeps our hearts asunder, I would still give much to look upon one face again—to call it my daughter's, for I am childless."

And as he spoke, Marie passed near them, with an imploring look at Jerningham to join her; but he waived her away hurriedly, and she returned to the hostel alone.

"So thus we part again!" said Ayesha; "and, as I warned you, perhaps for the last

time. The only tie between us is severed ; it passed away with *her*. Look to yourself, my Lord of Haverdale ; you have scorned the peace-maker, be prepared for the avenger ! ”

A flash of fire from her night-black eyes, a contemptuous gesture from her thin worn hand, and she was gone ! Jerningham and Lord Haverdale stood alone in the leafless forest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LOVE IN ITS LATER SPRING.

Car on revient toujours
A ses premiers amours!

Chansonnette.

IN a secluded apartment of her old mansion in the Faubourg St. Germain, sat Madame de Meranie, anxious and in expectation. Her hazel eyes, lustrous ever, but still more radiant now, were cast vacantly towards the logs that mouldered to whiteness on the hearth; but at every unusual sound, or passing carriage-wheel, those beautiful orbs wandered restlessly towards the door, opposite which she sat.

Her mind was filled with tumultuous hopes of the present, mingled, however, largely with strange recollections of the past. *Her* thoughts, too, were of Jerningham Hall and its former dwellers; for Lord Haverdale,

whom she then expected hourly, had announced to her the name of his companion, and the sound was fraught with everything that was most pleasing to her heart. The old Hall had been her happy retreat from the first revolution; it was there she had met Lord Haverdale, the lover of her later yet brighter years. In *her*, the ages of life's span had been reversed. Girlhood, linked to the imbecility of her miserable husband, had been her old age; womanhood, spent in the light of Lord Haverdale's love, now seemed her youth; and she was warmed by its effulgence like a landscape by the sun at mid-day. So much that she had never dreamed of had been called into existence by this affection; so many halcyon feelings that made life glorious, instead of a vague monotony; such sense, in her once-mourning spirit, of satisfied content, in lieu of its former aching void—that her devotion was perfect and undivided to the being who had given these sensations birth.

And, strange as it may seem, Lord Haverdale was equally sincere; perhaps it was the only occasion of his life when he ever had been really so. A fancy like his former one for Ayesha, beautiful as she was even when he

deserted her, *could* only be brief. There was nothing in her wild, uncultivated spirit, that could enthrall him, when the fatal demon Custom interposed its chilling finger and beauty palled upon his gaze. But the world of Madame de Meranie was the same world as his ; her intellectual resources were a fund that never failed—a mine never exhausted ; her very age was more agreeable to a man in whom the senses had long been satiated than a second girlhood would have been in her, if with magic wand she could have waved back twenty years of time ! Link by link, she had woven the chain around him ; step by step, her image had entered into his heart ; and now, *by* her alone was Lord Haverdale loved—to *her* alone were his accents never cold.

Need we say that it was of *him* she thought, as she sat, with her head reclining on her white hand, listening thoughtfully ? Need we say how she sprung to her feet like a startled deer when the door opened suddenly, and he entered unannounced ? He flung aside his travelling cloak, and she flew to his embrace. The marble countenance of the haughty peer seemed flushed in an instant with her fondness, and even illumined with something of

her beauty, as it bent among those unfaded chestnut curls, to kiss her cheek.

"Why this disguise and haste, *cheri*?" she said at last, after a long pause of happiness, in which hope and fear, and a thousand deep emotions, had struggled for utterance.

"I heard of danger and defeat on the road," he replied, hurriedly. "The attempt at Lyons—"

"Has failed!" she said.

"And we are compromised?"

"*Au contraire!*" she replied; "better plans are ripening. "The Government is at fault, and—"

"Didier! where is he?"

"At large—at Grenoble, sowing seed in a richer land for a surer harvest. The Duke of Orleans was here this very evening."

"Then all is well?" said Lord Haverdale.

"Very well," she answered. "But you are weary, milord—famished. While you partake of refreshment, I will tell you all."

She touched a small silver alarum. A Swiss entered, covered the table with an ample supper of cold meats, fruit, and wine; and they were alone again.

He took a few grapes and bread, and a

long, deep draught of the rich Burgundy ; and then, by the mellow fire-light, they sat hand-in-hand together, happily as if they were children once more—as if *he* were any one but Lord Haverdale, and *she* not thirty-eight.

Well for thee, cold gamester, that woman's love depends not on the deserts of him upon whom it is lavished ! Well for thee, Lord Haverdale, that feminine affection is, like sterner Justice, *blind* !

With the conversational tact peculiar to a Frenchwoman, she detailed to him the events that had lately occurred—the defeat of the outbreak at Lyons, the escape of Didier, their position for the present, their hopes for the future ; and when Edward Jerningham was spoken of and introduced, his reception by Madame de Méranie was so studiously kind, that Lord Haverdale's heart even was warmed into a more generous consideration of his youthful *protégé*, though he betrayed it not. But time revived, long years afterwards, the sentiment engendered in that very hour ; so strangely do apparent trifles affect our fate in this world !

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE EVE OF THE STRUGGLE.

“ Allons, enfans de la Patrie !
Le jour de gloire est arrivé ! ”

Marseillaise.

THE part that our hero was to play in furtherance of the schemes of Lord Haverdale was soon explained during the interview that ensued in the presence of Madame de Méranie. Though the wily peer wished to be represented in the struggle, he dared not appear there in person: his name was too well known, his fame too notorious as an intrigant. Young Jerningham was the very agent for his purpose—fearless, fiery, fond of adventure, but too little worldly-wise to attempt to snatch away the laurels that might accrue from success. Packed up snugly in a post-chaise,

supplied with money, passports, and every facility, he was whirled away by four horses towards Grenoble; and the unaccustomed novelty and excitement touched a newer chord of delight in his senses at every turn.

What a contrast with his plodding life in the lodging at Westminster! What a pity Revel was not there to join him. What paragraphs for Greville's newspaper, when the event had declared itself—"Anecdotes of the late Revolution, by a Spectator;" "Sketches of Scenes in the French Outbreak, by an Eyewitness;" "Tales of Thrilling Interest, for the *Court Echo!*" And then he thought of the Baroness, and how no chapters of the Novel had been prepared for the next number; and the plea to her readers of serious indisposition on the part of the author, who was flying along then and there in such spirits and health. It was all capital. Marie, too—he had not forgotten *her*. His first act, upon arriving late in the evening at his destination, was to despatch a packet to her, with a small sum of money, and a hundred promises of kisses and kindness upon his speedy return.

After hasty refreshment of the inward man, a hot bath, and the assumption of a *bourgeois*

disguise, Jerningham sauntered through the city to the rendezvous he had been instructed to seek. It was not, however, within the walls, but in the insignificant village of Buisserate, beyond Grenoble, that the "*venue*" had been laid for the final meeting of the confederates. Entering the *estaminet*—for it was little better—he gave the needful pass-word, and was led through the domino and billiard-players, to an old, dilapidated apartment, that was already crowded with conspirators in a dress similar to his own. His "*pass*" seemed to possess peculiar recommendations; for he was conducted up the room to a small knot of men, whose manner and bearing, by some inexplicable influence, marked them to be leaders in the cause. One of these—a tall, pale man, with silver hair and placid mien—immediately welcomed him in the English style, by extending his hand. Jerningham *felt* at once that he was in the presence of the master-spirit: never before had he seen such tranquil superiority stamped upon a human countenance—a mental fire that age had failed to quell—an innate nobility, that the meanness of his garb only served to heighten.

Before, however, any further communication

than a hasty inquiry after Lord Haverdale could take place between them, a cry arose from various parts of the room to hear Paul Didier. The old man pressed Jerningham's hand hurriedly, mounted a temporary forum that had been erected for the occasion, and, order having been restored, he proceeded, during a breathless silence, to unfold his plans for the future.

He commenced with a rapid review of the history of their country since the revolution of '89. In calm and convincing periods, he touched upon every salient point, and showed every error into which the friends of liberty had fallen. Alternating with each interest to which he alluded, his voice rose to the trumpet's power, and then died away to the low, clear whisper of a babe. With that mighty magic, Eloquence, he bowed his hearers before him as with a celestial will: his words thrilled them to enthusiasm, plunged them into despair, fired them to revenge, as he chose to touch the string. He spoke of the long tyranny they had undergone, the oppression of each and of all, talent unrewarded, benefits forgot, honesty despised, infamy in high places—of misery among the low; and then, with

bitter contempt and biting sarcasm, hurled his indignant anathemas at the degraded priesthood. The excitement of his hearers rose to delirium—they stamped, raved, ground their teeth with ire: while, warmed from his former calmness, the orator's eyes flashed back the fire of theirs: his vehement gestures assisted his words, and winged them home to their hearts.

The motives of the insurrection and the method of its accomplishment then became the subjects of his discourse; and he explained them lucidly and in detail. The part to be taken by each conspirator was defined with accuracy, and accepted with an oath. He concluded with an exciting harangue, calling upon his confederates to rally round the cause. He reminded them once more of their many wrongs; he painted in glowing colours the liberty for which they struggled, adding every illustration, classical and heroic, that could arouse their spirits, from the ancient glories of Marathon and Thermopylæ to the more recent lustre of their last hero, Napoleon the Great.

“Frenchmen,” he exclaimed at last, “let not the holy cause of the people perish! their sacred star wane in the firmament! Let not

liberty be disgraced! Let us save France from the Feudalism that oppressed her amid olden ignorance and wrong! Arise for your country's independence! unfold the tricolor! It is heaven that will fight the battle; for the cause of the people is the cause of God!"

Heated, like the rest, almost to intoxication by the eloquence to which he had listened, Jerningham wandered back to Grenoble—not, however, to slumber, but to wait, in sleepless and feverish excitement, the events of the coming day.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DEFEAT.

“Still, Freedom ! still thy banner, torn but flying,
Streams like a thunder-cloud against the wind !”

BYRON.

As Paul Didier, arriving at Grenoble after the meeting just described, passed the western gate of the agitated city, the sound of a familiar name fell upon his ear ; and, with the quick instinct of one playing a desperate game, he paused to listen.

A man in the costume of the royal guard was conversing with a female, whose figure was almost concealed by the shadow of a projecting buttress. At first, the words that passed between them were half-muttered and indistinct ; but still, the sound of *one* of the voices at least was not unknown to him, and

he crouched nearer and nearer, until within a foot or two of the speakers.

"Not here!" said the female interlocutor, in a tone of surprise.

"Not *yet*, at all events," replied the guard. A po'-chay came yesterday from Paris; but it wur a young feller, instead o' the old lord."

"Are you well assured there was no second traveller?" inquired the female voice, in some confusion.

"That's sartain," he answered; "for the young 'un jumped down the steps in such a plaguy 'urry, that he very nigh knocked me through the winder o' the chay; and I see clearly there warn't nothing else there when he wur gone, 'xcep a flask o' brandy and a pipe."

"Foiled again!" she exclaimed.

"Yes—he aint a bird as is caught every day," was the reply. "I thought, when I done the trick at Lyons, and peached on the conspiraytors, we should 'ave nabbed him; but he wur up to trap, and slipped the noose."

Didier's brow grew furrowed, and his cheek more pale, at these latter words, that revealed to him who was the traitorous speaker. His hand played uneasily with a knife that was

hidden under his dress ; but, with a violent effort, he controlled his indignation, and stood motionless as the grave.

“ For *this*, then,” continued the woman, “ I have withheld the blow, that it might fall with more deadly aim ; for *this*—to be foiled at last. Oh, curses ! while I played with the bird, it has slipped from the meshes. Curses ! but no—he is here concealed ! My intelligence is sure ; I cannot doubt it. He is unseen in the calm, but he will be fluttering in the storm. Oh, if I thought *he* had escaped my vengeance, would I not change my ranks even now ! What are kings to me, that I should love them ? Accursed kites ! Nobles, and all their brood—I loathe them, spit at them !”

The woman stepped forward a pace or two : the dim light of the dawn fell upon her countenance, in every feature of which rioted passionate anger, with a fury that threatened insanity.

Suddenly, a heavy tramp of soldiery was heard. The speakers and the listener shrank again from observation beneath the overhanging wall.

Heavily accoutred, their bayonets glistening

with a cold, weird light in the rays of morning, they passed by, rank and file, the officers bringing up the rear. It was a portion of the garrison of Grenoble, despatched to St. Valier, Vienne, and Lyons, to line the route taken by the daughter of the King of Naples, who was about to give her hand at the altar to the ill-fated Duke de Berri. The departure of these troops was the signal for the insurrection.

"Aye, aye, pass on to welcome the bride to the arms of her sleek lover!" exclaimed the woman, when their footsteps had died away. "Does *he* think love can last? Does *she* believe in the truth of man? Fools! Hark!"

A low, gathering sound, like the ebb of a wave over a pebbled beach—louder, like its swell as it rises again into a mountain of crested water, thundering soon thereafter like the fall of the mighty billow, as in foam and whitest anger it wreaks its violence upon the shore—came upon their ears, step by step, the hum, the clamour, the roar of the arising multitude.

The guard hurried to his post. The woman leaned, cold and impassive, beside the buttress. Paul Didier disappeared.

Then came the peal of the city bells, the dull boom of the first cannon, the startled cries of the soldiery, the shouts of the revolutionists for freedom. Still stood the woman pale and motionless.

The tumultuous uproar that soon followed gave sufficient evidence that the struggle had become general. The discharges of musketry grew gradually measured and incessant. People hurriedly closed their shutters and barricaded their doors, and occasionally a female shriek cleft the prevailing noise with a shriller horror.

Unmoved stood the female figure, in an attitude of watching.

Before long war began to show its ghastly reality in the wounded and slain. A single soldier would hurry by, leading a blood-stained comrade from the action—a citizen hastening homeward with the burden on his shoulder of a gashed child or murdered brother. The tide of the battle, though it had become universal, swayed toward the gate, where stood the woman in attitude like a tiger crouching for its prey. She knew that the vanquished would retire by that path to gain the shelter of the forest. Nearer and nearer came the combatants ; the ring of swords and clank of

horsemen drew close, cries of the victorious, shrieks of the retiring ridden under foot. They entered the very street; a shower of bullets swept it, from the soldiery; the insurrectionists were in retreat bearing to the city portal. The cause was lost. Bravely still the conspirators fought, for defeat was certain death, and their courage was that of despair. On, on, another charge for Liberty; another effort for Freedom's sake to turn the fortunes of the day. At the head of the retreating ranks was Paul Didier, pale with the fear that all was lost, but still contesting every foot of ground that was yielded, encouraging his comrades by the war-cry of their party to rally round their standard, and struggle on. Again the sharp crack of the musquetry, again the undaunted shout of the survivors. But lo! it grows feebler and fainter, as one after another sinks never to rise again. There is a momentary wavering among the revolutionists; they fall from their ranks—sink into confusion; their heart, their spirit is broken; huddled together in a beaten mass they think only of retreat, of defending themselves from the sabres of the mounted hussars, who trampled them down amid the bloody mire,

of reaching the gate that was their only escape from the fatal city. Rendered powerless by the pressure of the multitude, Paul Didier was borne away with the rest. He knew that all was over. Close to the portal a soldier dashed towards him to prevent his escape ; it was the guard to whose conversation he had been an unseen listener. To any other his broken fortunes might have suffered him to yield ; but the sight of the traitor inflamed once more his drooping spirit. He lifted his sword with both hands ; its descent buried it deep in the skull of the villain, and bespattering her dress with scattered brains and blood, Shingle the murderer fell dead at the feet of Ayesha, while Paul Didier fled to the forest of St. Martin d'Heres.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CONCLUSION.

WITH the conclusion of the insurrection, Edward Jerningham's part as a mere looker-on was at an end, and having satisfied himself of the decisive character of the defeat, he quitted Grenoble. There was no obstacle to his departure. His position had been merely that of an English gentleman, travelling for amusement. He had not interfered in the struggle. His interview with Paul Didier at Buisserate had escaped notice, and he received in consequence every attention from the authorities that could facilitate his journey back to Paris.

Upon arriving at the capital, he hastened to Madame de Méranie's hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain. It was her evening of reception, and the salons were full of company, and brilliantly lighted. While he changed his dress, a messenger notifying his arrival was

despatched to Lord Haverdale ; and when he entered the elegant apartments, his graceful hostess whispered him aside that, upon the arrival of milord, they would join him in an ante-room, which she indicated.

The universal topic of conversation among the assembled guests was the insurrection, intelligence of which had reached Paris by special courier an hour or two before Jerningham arrived. Animated discussions upon the event took place, as fresh visitors came flocking from theatres, balls, and late dinner parties. Politicians looked grave, Napoleonists excited, the votary of the Bourbon indignant and solemn : while, in the midst of the agitation, some fine lady declared that an hour and a-half was quite enough for any subject ; voted it a bore from that moment, and proposed a dance to relieve the monotony. Madame de Méranie welcomed the proposal as a means of escape. With the volatility of their national disposition, the guests accepted the *plaisanterie*, laughed, and acquiesced. Music, with its voluptuous measures, drowned the memory of crushed Ambition, and the *denouement* of another of Life's tragedies was forgotten in a dance !

Beckoned apart by Madame de Méranie, Jerningham followed her to the apartment she had chosen, and he found himself in the presence of Lord Haverdale, and a Frenchman, whom he knew from other circumstances to be Talleyrand. The news of the whole revolution had been spread abroad so suddenly, that our hero's narrative conveyed little except a confirmation of the facts, and an addition of minor details.

Talleyrand detected himself sighing—actually committing himself with a sigh, when the story was concluded. He took a pinch of snuff, and before the delicately-embroidered handkerchief could remove the few grains dropped upon his frill, he had recovered himself into his usual impassive tranquillity. His hope was still in a thirteenth constitution!

Lord Haverdale's pale brow and chiselled features were contracted, but with evident pain, into a rigid calm. Twice he rose from his seat, and twice conquered the emotion, and then, with a violent mental effort, he seemed to forbid the recurrence of the recollection in the same way that he would have stricken out of his path an offensive reptile. He bade adieu to Jerningham, gave him a

pocket-book, the bulk of which denoted that it was lined with gold as well as silk, and advised him to return to England, and consider him henceforth a friend.

Madame de Méranie sat with her hands clasped, her lips tremulous, her beautiful eyes dilated with agitation, but still bent in love—love inexpressible—upon Lord Haverdale. After a long, sad silence, he looked up, and saw that fervent expression of watchfulness. And then he took her hand, and pressed it fondly; and the veil of her sorrow shrank away in an instant, like morning mist before the sunbeams, and her countenance lightened radiantly with a confiding smile!

So the deepest schemes are defeated, the noblest dreams melt into air, the most earnest hopes of humanity are undone, and life passes away like a tale that is told!

* * * * *

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Meantime where was the baffled fugitive, Paul Didier?

In a miserable cabin, situated among the eternal snows of the inhospitable Alps, surrounded by unbroken silence, by agonizing solitude, by never-yielding frost, accompanied

by three companions, he had paused to repose. Borne down to the dust with wounds and despair, he had just confessed all the deception he had practised to lure them on. It was not Napoleon whom their triumph would have recalled to a vacant throne, as he had led them to believe, but the Duke of Orleans (a detested Bourbon) was to have snatched the crown away. Then came the bitter reproaches of the deceived, who had sacrificed all, angry recriminations, and muttered vows of revenge. Wearied with pain of mind as well as body, he sank to sleep, and they looked at each other with a peculiar meaning. When he awoke, they were gone.

Dreading instantly that they had determined to betray him, he fled on, on, shedding tears of burning agony upon the mountain snow that lacerated his blood-stained feet. On, on, over precipice and pass, down chasm and gorge, now lost in choking fogs, now buried in wild defiles, or lost among strange, shapeless, frowning rocks, and everywhere the chilling snow, everywhere that death-like silence. Horrible! horrible! It overcame him: fear entered his spirit, and held it in thrall. In that dire hour he thought of the history of blood that would

assail his name hereafter. The phantoms of old comrades rose before him with threatening gesture and reproachful mien, bidding him look upon his deeds. On, on to Piedmont, dragging his limbs along with declining powers miserably. Villages came in sight, but he dared not enter ; a price is on his head : human kind have cut him off from their brotherhood. A forest ! sombre, silent, the habitation of the snake and the wolf—*there* is *his* resting-place ; a fallen tree his pillow, the earth his couch of down ! And there at last he is tracked, wakened from dreams of happier childhood, seized, bound, conveyed to the comparative luxury of a prison, only to come forth to die !

* * * * *

Weeks have passed : early morning in the palace, the hut, and the prison. Its beams fall mournfully upon the cell of Didier. From its turret the death-bell tolls solemnly for a parting soul. One step to the walls, and one to the scaffold ; and one—ah ! where ? Everlasting farewells—children, wife to embrace for the last time—the last glance at the wide overhanging sky, the last earnest look at the

face of man ! He passes through the soldiers, on foot, arrayed for the grave ! The multitude is hushed in awe ; silence suspends the air : no sound save the low mutterings of the priest—

“ Dies iræ, dies illa,
Solvat sæclum in favilla ! ”

Where is he ? His thoughts wander : he has seen that dread cavalcade before ! he remembers the warning vision now—

“ Dies iræ, dies illa ! ”

The scaffold is mounted with manly step : he has done with this world already in spirit : an embrace from the priest, a believing kiss on the sacred image of the Redeemer of mankind, forgiveness to the headsman, a wild shriek of horror that chills the spectators, and—he heard it not—the blow had fallen ! the soul of Paul Didier had winged its earthly flight ! His remains were buried in the cemetery of Grenoble ; and a simple stone inscribed with his name, is the only reminiscence of a brave heart sacrificed to the ambition of the *then* Duke of Orleans, the late Louis Phillipe !

* * * * *

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

